

Cell Fantastick

By Jay Halpern

I could tell you a tale, if ye'd understand from the outset it has no purpose to it, no shape or form or discipline but the tucket and boom of its highflown language and whatever dim flickers that noise stirs up in yer cerebrium, sir--

John Gardner

The King's Indian

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away from myself. And the sludge in my skull churns as I resist, putting me to sleep. My lids slide my world into darkness. The physical pressure of wet flesh against shiny eyeball, passing slowly across consciousness, becomes secret pleasure, an orgasmic release. Sloth is my enemy, a deadly sin. Eyes crossed in darkness, lungs lethargic, my blood is at peace. Still, the dreams persist. Parallel shafts of light from the alley slice my mattress into rhomboids, carve my naked body into hunks of torn and butchered flesh. ~~Before I sleep~~ I see my thigh hanging from a hook in Mr. Mondo's shop. The housewives gape at it, prod it with hat pins and forks, examine it for marbled rolls of muscle and flesh, approve. Blood sizzles where the pins strike. In ^{an} ~~the~~ instant ~~before sleep~~ I think of the otherness of my body. My soul fills with my body. Thoughts become the sluggish splash of blood. Emotions, the ebb and flow of blood. Words like "reality" are harsh and anger me. If I would think and think of nothing I need not think at all. Masking nothingness in fleshy illusion angers ^fme. My heart beats faster. I wish myself harm, disintegration. My calloused fingers and torpid lungs are reality. They swell like a bloated corpse, blue and gaping, and become my universe. What do they tell me? They don't protect me from my dreams. I see a mist, it grows out of my sluggish blood, the chalky residue of chemical waste and excrement splashing against the nuclei of my brain cells. I sink into and out of that mist. Neither darkness nor light nor weight nor cunning possession ^fme. Mark me well, I say to myself. Mark me well, sound my depths, here, here, you mad fool, is reality. And that word like lightning in my brain angers me and my fluid madness grows. Sounds appear, music to me yet I know it's music only to me. Music ^{as} ~~in the~~ ~~sense of~~ harmonic juxtapositions, neither melodic nor soothing nor glorious. Terrifying in the extreme. The sound of planets and heavens twisted in their crystal spheres by the calloused hands of an angry god. The systole of dead motion. The diastole of dreams floating against my skull. Dreams like tiny

angels cracking their insect wings against the bones of my skull. Filaments
 of my thoughts Sweep the cracked and battered angels away, into darkness. Their
 reality was one moment of motion, snuffed. Then fragile remains, gossamer veined
 fly-wings, colors glinting into the idiocy of darkness. A face peeks at me
 between random curls of mist: ancient eyes peering darkly from sagged and
 wrinkled puffs of flesh. The eyes: the face is in the eyes. The flashing
 fiery eyes beneath ridged and heavy brows, random hairs upright and stray,
 cracked and curved away from the eye straining toward freedom. My soul is
 captured in those eyes, but only part. Divisible and vulnerable, that part
 of me that is me eludes me. I think I can touch it in sleep when the glare and
 faction of the world is tamed. When my limbs go limp and my veins open and
 and the blood rushes madly through my body, I feel the tip of my soul, a
 thousand iceberg tips crashing amongst corpuscles and floating debris of my
 life processes: motes of dirt, rat hairs, ~~I've eaten~~, scales of metal. ~~I've inhaled~~
~~just by keeping alive~~. My soul is multitude and disparate: it defies confinement
 and survey. Dead, she reaches for me from the grave I dug. Her voice, like
 a heron's whisper from the past, shatters me. Come she beckons come plead for
 me she curls a warning finger come stand by me I fear the ice and darkness.
 My fear mingles with her fear and that pulls me to her, draws me from myself
 toward a stench and hellish pit. Her voice shatters and caresses. I see her
 auburn hair curled stiffly in the lamplight, her hard face pale and seamed.
 Part of me she is, the ribbed underside of a vein, as intimate as a cloacal
 curve. My own, my own flesh, my own flesh and blood. Glory drifts in my blood,
 perhaps the union of pulse and perversity. Slack-jawed, I mumble an incantation
 to the moon, my muse. My body twists. The moon twists far above the sea, the
 capped and foaming waves scattering its white light like dancing sperm. I mumble
 incantations in my terror, the faces emerge from the abyss of ancient night,
 the moon, the sun, the gods. A tortured rhythm emerges from the procession
 of light and shadow. Through that rhythm I lose myself to find myself. The

rules shatter, the planetary motions dissolve, the twisted rebus of the galaxy
 explodes. And illusion is no more, for nothing is. Except my slothful, spongy
 sleep and mad dreams. I can't speak in parables. I won't speak in parables:
 I must suck life into the vortex of my experience, not beguile it with tales
 and dramas of counterfeit people and times. Poetry that is: a poetry of life,
 pulsing with the pulse of my blood, sluggish when I am sluggish, frenzied when
 I dance near madness. And offal bedecks my footprints in the snow, dark
 lumpish necklaces, stinking filigree around which I pick my way. Snowstorms
 blind me. Whiteness, flecked and freezing, burning my eyes, resting on my
 lashes, ~~making me heavy lidded~~ *beguiling my eyes shut*, my breathing fails, ~~I tell myself~~ I can't go on.
 Then through the white gusts I see the icon far ahead, a black shrine. The
 woods part and the wind dies and I stand facing the black icon at twenty paces,
 a painted wooden box nailed to a pole. I approach thinking to touch the saint's
 wounds, paint and wood though they are, and the snow sucks my feet pulling me
 back. But I can't touch it: there's no painted saint, just the grinning skull
 of a wayfarer *caught like me. Eyesockets black and deep, flushed*
 with snow. Nausea and terror buckle my knees, I kiss the frozen ground
 with a bloody mouth. Pink snow. Then the storm folds in upon me, covering
 my back, covering the pink. Dreams of grandeur flash through oblivion. All
 I had meant to be, *do*. And so heavy is the burden of the snow, the burden of
 myself. At night when the moon, my silver lover, shines like a glorious etched
 globe, I cry out asking why I was not born a tiny bird, a fevered flash of pulsing
 life, free to fly, to glide through the clouds, to burn my tiny existence into
 ash with sheer living. Brief, yet glowing. A roman candle, cold and dusty
 in an instant yet god what glory, what gaping glory when the colors burst in
 the night, barium reds and cobalt greens and heavenly sulphur blues, colors
 that float slowly to earth and burn your eyes and make children squeal in terror
 and lovers squeeze each other closer, and old soldiers think of the flash of

battle, the pop and ~~vibration~~ ^{Resonance} of distant unseen weaponry. They wonder why they come to be reminded of lonely nights filled with terror in jungles or bunkers or trenches, waiting for the irrevocable thumb of death to screw them to the mud like a beetle. Tiny birds and grand rockets: symbols of fever and brevity. And I drag myself between them. I pull worms and maggots from the moist earth, but slowly, with great difficulty, smearing myself with slime. And I will be grey ashes and sulphur stench when the end comes, unredeemed by the glorious colors of a moment. All the burdens, the mortality, the abyss, without the soaring flight, the flash and fire. Did the saint know that he lived and suffered so that his icon could become one day a skull and throw me to the ground, vomiting? Agony is unredeemed: the penalty ^{for} being alive, of having nerves with which to feel and sinews to propel us to the lip of the abyss. I treated my body like the temple of my soul. I cultivated strength and speed. My feet cracked the leaves and twigs of many a forest floor as I ran, for sheer joy, filling my lungs with the pure vapors of forest air. The woodchuck and chipmunk fled before me. The spotted salamander and orange eft stiffened beneath their rocks listening in terror, their cold flesh stony and still, overwhelmed by the ~~vibrations~~ ^{thunder} of my passage. The fluttering forest moth brushed my face with its fur, careening wildly against me in its thoughtless escape. How pure and chill was the brook as it trickled past my mouth, eddying in pools and around rocks. I sacrificed some of the silver water to the temple of my body: cold against my teeth, so refreshing to my shrinking throat. Soft grass and spangled moss was my bed. My fingertips, stretched above my head, brushed the peeling emery of a fallen tree trunk, spongy with rot. I watched my chest rise and fall, ever less, until my eyes stared up at the sun, blinking motes through the distant leaves, and then shut in sleep. A child leaning backwards in a car, looking up through the rear window, ~~The leaves passed quickly overhead and I grew dizzy, hypnotized, feeling that~~ ^{a feeling of}

~~I was flying~~ ^{flight} through a heaven of green and brown, ~~rather than, beneath them.~~

Then the wind licked my beard awake, making the hairs pirouette, invisible hands raised gracefully, linked in swerving unison. A dance: what else is life but the mute and random coupling of atoms that touch and kiss and drift apart to rejoin later in new steps, new couplings, forever and ever? Consciousness is a terrible accident, a deception, a false choreography. With consciousness comes purpose, the joke of the universe. The veins in my arm stand out. Conduits of life and filth. I raise the dumbbell again, and lower it, and the veins stand out more. The temple of my soul. Does my soul flow in fragments through my veins with my blood? Or am I merely being a poet to speak of soul at all? My need to feel need trips my feet over jewels of metaphor. I will fall, come to rest, and taste bloody snow in any case. To rise? I rose from the moss of the forest; I rose from my lover's pillow, leaving my manscent of sweat and lust; I rose from the asphalt roof naked, my skin hot and sweated from the sun; I rose from stiff pages on which my head had dropped, drowsy; I rose from the hot water of the bath, my skin flushed and saltless; I rose from sweating wrestler's body, victorious: but from the snow? A red-winged blackbird chirped at me from the branches of a tree. My lover turned to me with searching eyes and wanted my body again, wanted me to pump and throb against her flesh with lust. My heart cried out from the city-stench and heat. My mind cried out to be filled, frightened me with dreams of damnation for my ignorance. The ^farteries of my neck thumped my gullet, choking me. Drained, I rose to revel in the limp surrender of another. Such are the cycles, the rising and falling, embossed with specious motives and justifications, vortexed by sounds and images and dizzy spinings of clouds. Madness be my metaphor. The healthy sister slept; the sick sister fumed. Then she rose and pulled a butcher knife from the enamelled kitchen drawer and walked quietly toward her sleeping sister and looked down at her, a last loving farewell, and brought the knife down into her heart and blood splashed the walls and there was a

mouse's groan and her arm no longer belonged to her but was pushed by invisible demons to stab and stab and stab thirty-one, thirty-two times and then she left her sister to sleep and sat in the kitchen covered with blood and laid the cruel blade, all sticky and red, on the table and she mumbled to herself, fuming, forgetting what she had done. Children found the corpse and went mad with sorrow and terror and rage. That is the role of children: to reflect our barbarity with wide childish eyes: to burn with impotence that the world in which they are so vulnerable is so beyond their understanding. They rage to know why. If they must witness death, then why. If they must suffer the hatred of parents, then why. If they must awaken in the darkest hours of night to the screams of a wounded mother and the furious bulging eyes of a balding father with bloody knuckles, then why. If they must listen to a despairing father weep in a closed room and hear the click of a pistol being cocked and the shattering explosion and the thump of skull and brains against the back wall, then why. And growing up means no longer asking why. Motivations are sheets of mica pressed against each other, to be peeled and peeled until there is nothing. Just mystery. Each sheet is attractive and shiny yet fragile as a frozen whim. So many of them pass in review and the mystery remains: we grasp air. Let the scholars fool themselves with their categories and codifications and remembrances of things past and their vacant, echoing pontifications: they open clenched fists and find within nothing but grey-fleshed palms. Why do those dark eyes haunt me from the mists? I sense that a face will emerge, one that I will recognize though we are separated by parsecs of space and eons of time. Kinship then can fly with light throughout this curving bubble of a universe, across dimensions, through warps and black holes and through the very pith of spewing stars. The darkness of my lethargy filled once with a vision of myself floating in the black vacuum of space, feeling a tickle of solar wind against my naked flesh, like grains of lightning,

suffocated, burned, frozen, my eyes wide with awe more than pain. I could see no other stars but a vast blue-white sun rotating before me. Dark copper blemishes on the sun's surface turned with the solar day. appearing like angry mouths hurling curses at me through the silence of space. Still I stared, immobile, through burned and blinded eyes. Then the whirling ball of gas shrank and nova'd and all substance was vaporized. My thoughts, in dream-like disembodiment, flew out with the flotsam of the star, ~~reassembled into coherence~~ ^{cohered}, and summoned the random atoms of my former self to coalesce. I was naked as before yet changed: my thoughts supercharged, racing with the fleeing ions to the ends of the universe, brothers. I could perceive all: count the totality of stars, follow the curve of a ray of light, study civilizations rise and fall peopled by strange creatures, creatures of immobile crystal, creatures of vapor and blue gas, creatures ~~that were~~ ^{of} disembodied harmonies whose entire culture and civilization ~~resided~~ ^{resonated} in a single struggle toward an exquisite vibration that would fill the silent ether with endless beauty. I beamed like a sun, burning with love and joy. I could effect all: neon balls, glowing pink yet doomed to disassemble and return to coldness and vapor, I bid congeal and be fruitful. Crusted planets torn by war and decadence I bid vaporize, return to primal non-entity. From my vantage I created evolutionary spirals, I built whole solar systems from dust and gas, I taught love to crawling creatures of stone, I taught rage to fishy pods gurgling in the mud of oceanic worlds. Yet with my omnipotence and perception, I was not omniscient. I could see all and control all but I was like a child, a disembodied giant of a child, and I knew the tragedy of god. I could not discern the future because I held the fibers of the future within me and, child-like, I dared not look within myself. I wept over my errors when I saw the destruction of healthy beings due to my sloth and blindness. I wept over seedlings that died before fruition; I wept over ignorance that resisted teaching, life-forms that shrivelled and died when reason was introduced to them. Cuticles

shred the half-moons of my nails. They shine in the light! ~~My nails, not the cuticles.~~ ^{My} My nails shine in the light of a billion stars. The omnipotent one sinks sleepily into his cloud of sparks. Thick, stuffy vapor fills my lungs. I grow dizzy with fatigue. Eyes roll. Faces. Sparkling grey eyes: a man in love with all that is admirable flowing from human hands. His head, heavy and brimming, rocks in gay laughter. His eyes wink at me, mocking the knaves and devils. Be calm, argue from your head, bid your heart be still and smolder. Long enough, just long enough to attack the devil's with passionless wisdom, the lancet of reason and logic. I know what I say is impossible. They demand that you fight their unholy war, that you commit atrocities, the destruction of life and civilization, in their name. For their sick, hypocritical vomiting of words like freedom and democracy. Water swelled his eyes and he turned away angered at his own loss of passionless wisdom, his brave head etched harsh in the chiaroscuro, ~~light~~ a master's study in despair. Our species ~~has~~ sunk so low, our struggle out of the soup of ancient oceans ~~has~~ ended in this sickness. The accident of reason, passed through generations of generations, culminates in this civilized, sophisticated man telling children that death and slavery are life and freedom. For this the ancestors warred in jungles and crossed dry sands in nomadic search for life. They lived in proximity to death and knew the value of life. They stared wide-eyed at the lightning and knew the brutal majesty of god. His bearded face, gunmetal, his eyes deep in thought, he reached out to me, saw in my haunted young eyes the fire of purgative disease. We are misplaced. What are we doing here, watching men devour men, watching the rape of our heritage? Our souls struggle against wristlocks and wild eyes and brutal teeth. They're thrown to the ground, to the mud from which it took us eons to arise. We force their legs wide apart with our knees, ~~our~~ ^{our} ~~limp~~ ^{vanguished by the musk and} impotence disappears from excitement at the savagery of violation. We satisfy our doubts that we are men by dismissing our humanity and returning to a state ~~of being~~ below the beasts. He rested his arm around my shoulder

pressing me close to him. We're not satisfied with being brutes ourselves; we must corrupt the young. That is the sin for which hellfire will appear after we die. Such corruption can only be destined for flames, either here or in some dark hereafter. I like to think their souls burn, those defilers of the young. But they snort and squeal in secret pleasure spas: their bellies swell with finest wines and choicest meat: their skins luxuriate beneath drapereries of smoothest silk and satin: their dead eyes pass before the finest art, they clap their dead hands politely. Quite fine, the form, the integrated structure. Surely this is genius. Such serenity of line. Indeed. Quite so. Amazing how he captured the quintessence of human suffering. We have no painters like that anymore. A cigarette flames in shadow, coal bright eye. Thank you. And one for my friend. Really, why can't they paint like that anymore? Patronage, my dear. We've decayed into democracies and try as we might, there simply are no kings anymore. No aristocracies. Art needs a firm hand to demand greatness of it. A firm hand and limitless sums of money, money acquired only through ruthlessness. Those Renaissance princes were the true martyrs, never mind your dirty bearded saints. They left us the greatest heritage of art and their spirits must be maligned daily, for centuries, by soft decadent libertarians condemning their brutality, libertarians who haven't the first notion of the responsibilities, the moral fiber, the daily sacrifice and discipline concomitant to the firm establishment of a mercantile empire. Ruthlessness, I said: yes, the ruthlessness of dedication, the same ruthlessness that enabled the saints to walk unswerving into the flames. Men like us, you see, left a legacy of pure beauty, besides a world network of goods and services that help make this vale of tears moderately tolerable. Bounarotti, Da Vinci, Giotto. The saints: a few sparse books, those of them that could write, to be read by little old ladies in their dotage. And far more fetters than they ever loosened. Look at what our democracies produce: shoddy images of chaos. Undisciplined. It makes one regret the hour one was

born. True. Too true. The painted wrinkles, camouflaging beasts' eyes,
 dusty with age, screw up in taut disapproval, nodding agreement. Jewels
 flash. Lumpmusic ^{wrenched} ~~carried~~ from the bowels of the earth. Diamonds. Place
 the stone on the chest of a person poisoned and he is cured. Antidote to venom.
 Then why? The old philosophers and mad alchemists were wrong. They stewed
 their concoctions over blue flames, pinched their noses against the stench,
 sometimes blew up with their dreams. How bitter is the venom of the mind.
 They all suffered it: lust for power, for omnipotence. An ancient face etched
 by stark ^{shadow} ~~enl'aroseuro~~ as if in granite, bent over a crucible. Fumes and sparks
 fill the tiny room strewn with makeshift tubes and flasks, worn parchments
 and dusty arcane texts. The silence of the full-mooned night is suddenly
 shattered by a tremulous groan from the other world. He trembles, in fear
 and eagerness. His eyes gape wide, his hairy brows thick and wild. His
 beard untrimmed roots into his cheek like a frenzied fur leech. The mixture
 bubbles, a shadow appears, coalesces, ^{snaked} dwarf rests in the crucible,
 born without a soul. I have access to the soulless forces. I, who am
 without a soul. What would you have? I would have your master. You are
 my master. Your great master, the final master of us all. Moonlight sprinkles
 with the dwarf's laugh. Done. Frigid blows a wind through the laboratory.
 The philosopher turns, whipping his cloak tightly around his limbs, expectant.
 Magic. Such ferment. Foolishness. Superstition. Still, the simple thought
 curls my limbs in my lethargy, my body wars against itself to rise and search
 the darkling night for apparitions, whispers of the dead. Death, I fear. The
 finality of disintegration. I, too, silent and helpless as a mote of cracked
 stone drifting between solar systems. Would there was a fairy land to beguile
 eternity for me. Eternity can be an instant, it's all in the mind. Perhaps
 at death's point the final fury of the mind rebels: that is eternity, the
 thought that doesn't die. Like this dream? This sleep? The face in the mist.
 Eyes only, now. But later? I know it will congeal, the veil will part. I

abjure death like a demon. Away, sloth. Away, disintegration. Away: my eyes curl upward, sight into myself. Inside my skull. Blood and dirt and sparks. And when the sparks crackle into silence? Eaten by bugs, the bugs think, my mind survives in a billion tiny thinking bugs, each with a single thought, a single spark to shatter the dark oblivion. Then two, then four, then eight... and other minds devoured... and my mind mixes with theirs, struggles for dominance. The primal urge: the self independent of all else. Man's grief and glory. Woe to the weak who suppress this urge. The corporate man. The man lost in a corridor, running his fingers against wood paneling, biting his lip. Hear the scratch, feel the shiver. The body's protest against the cold and the unknown. And ~~also~~ the death-knell of that primal core. Mask it, my friend, if you want to succeed. Let me be blunt, I only want to help. There are too many of us, you see, too many who show the same non-entity. We are the faceless ones. Our faces are mirrors in which we reflect the mirrors of others. And in the end is nothing, you see, the sum total of all of us is nothing. Yet the industry flourishes. The few creative ones, who have faces, or whose mirrors are cracked or distorted, are squeezed and disposed of. We then swarm, faceless, eternal. One dies, six^{are} born, unoffending, silent, faceless. Who would shout against us? The lost ones who can't fit in, whose faces are flesh and blood and mortal, not crystal? Let them scream and fume. Let them scribble or smear what they will. They pass. Poor, burned out, forgotten, remembered. It doesn't matter. Even those who leave something behind, leave only an excretion, a bit of crust bound in leather or paper or hanging on a wall or eyeing us coldly, perhaps suspiciously, but nonetheless impotently from a pedestal in a serene garden. But we are the real immortals: we leave faceless ones pulsing warm with life: clones. So wipe that fierce flash of thought from your eyes; calm yourself; dress right. Better, yes that's better. Now we can talk business. And the child rests her bottom in a mudhole, pissing. She watches the sky for

planes, noisy vultures dropping dung of death. She strains, shifts, and starts to clean herself with leaves and mud. But the humid air's silence is shattered by the crackle of jungle grass under many boots. Rising on her hindquarters like a mouse, she sniffs and runs. Laughter follows the makeshift bolo that binds her legs, felling her. A sergeant, bleary, unshaven, reaches her first. Pulls her to her torn feet. Her knees wobble painfully, her legs lacerated from the cutting cord. Her eyes have turned to frozen globes of coffee, fearful and defiant. He looks her over with one good eye, ~~not~~ the eye of a connoisseur. She is tall for her age with thin but well-muscled limbs. Her hair, though filthy, is long and thick and glints almost blue-black in the hot sun. Maybe she's twelve. No tits yet. His breathing quickens, his men gather. He looks around, ascertains the time, no danger, they've got time. Holding her by the shoulder, he rips off the rag that covers her. She averts her face, furious with shame. Her little hand covers her cunt. Let her cover herself. She looks demure, poetic. One soldier, wiping his shades, thinks of Botticelli's Venus and happier times. Another soldier walks behind her admiring how her naked ass so softly rides upon her slim legs, globes like fluid eggs undulating with the heavy jungle wind: not like the puckered and sagging asses he was used to, scrounged up in ~~dive~~ ^{gin-mills} and pleased dubiously in alleys, ~~and~~ hunched over garbage cans. Then begins the danse macabre, the casual loosening of buttons and zippers, the vulgarities, the laughter. A strange tongue, hideous and malevolent. And the freedom fighters, the god-fearers, the upright heroes of an upright land pin her arms above her head with ropes, hang her from a tree, and spread her legs wide apart. Days of jungle lust for a woman, dark nights haunted by sick dreams of almond eyes and crinkled aureolae of dark, deep hue: quenched in the body of this little girl. Regrettable, but better far than the quick, barely felt brushing of one's naked palm against the khaki crotch of a comrade: that fellow with the lonely thoughtful eyes who turns so nervously when your eyes meet, that soldier whose latissimus dorsi rippled invitingly when

he took off his shirt to douse his neck and shoulders with water. Real men, lean and firm and initiated into the trying mysteries of manhood, kindred spirits. No, that all remains unspoken, better the girl slung like a pig's carcass between the bent limbs of a tree. She's a treasure, a true treasure. The daughter or little sister one dares not touch back home. But this steaming jungle and the weight of weapons is a liberation from the iron links of custom and social order. They will go on, perhaps to death or lingering disfigurement, and other nights of demons and cold sweat. So they mount her, stifling her screams with a golf ball gag, filling her cunt and ass with blood and semen. And when the twenty men are through, they leave her hanging for the flies and serpents. And the soldier with the shades turns and shoots her through the head thinking of Botticelli's Venus. Foam caps and swirling mist: the blue sea parts with a splash and the genitals of Cronos redden the waters. She rises from the waves, naked and gleaming with the dew of morning. Zeus stares down, bloody and savage from his mother's cunt, sticky with the blood of new birth and violent conquest. Yes, those eyes. Fierce-frowning. There is something of these eyes in the eyes that reveal themselves to me in the mist: the eyes in the mist intense and unblinking. More yet: the color is the same sparkling emerald, yes emerald, green and flashing, and there is depth in them. I can look in and see deep recesses, a vortex sucking for me. Threatening. Of late all my dreams threaten me. They stink of suffering. What have I done? Why does my metaphoric mind torment me? Perhaps I expiate the sins of a past life. What foolishness. God knows there are enough of them in this life to keep me burning for an eternity. Yet, how? Suffering is not expiation. The crown of thorns without good works and miracles is nothing but a painful, humiliating death. Where are my works and miracles? The lethargy consumes them, aborts the fetuses, drives me into the flux of symbol and dream. Words flow. Whispers of the dead. Come, come, be brave, be strong, sink down to us. Sink to our flames and forked tails. I'll sink, all right. To give battle. Dore's

hideous demons, howling and serpentine their scaly wings in frantic flocking amidst the thick stenchy fog of hell. And me, quixotic with a single slender lance, nauseous, fearful, unwilling yet immovable from my forward course. To storm the brimstone and battlements and free myself from the zombies' walking death. In my youth I thought to fight for others, little knowing how lost I was myself. Fettered by false dreams, distracted by lust, I claw my youth to my breast with the talons of a griffin. That day in the South Bronx we thought to clean up a neighborhood. White missionaries, sweaty and self-satisfied in a black jungle. And they regaled us, or some of them. Those who prided themselves on their rich white friends. The fat black politicians, the hefty mommas being "sensible", fawning. And they gave us food, lots of chicken and rice. Poor people's food. Not the shooting-gallery snow, but the staple that looks good on a poverty poster. And the junkies huddled in some black hallway, shivering, stumbling, nodding; out of sight. And we smiled at each other and praised our work. I pulled concrete from the alleys and looked lustfully at the blonde girls in tight tee shirts sweating next to me. Black faces in windows and from doorways, hidden in half-light, stared at them too. The kind of girls who would grow up to ball those men with black faces, plunge themselves when their breasts and ~~erotics~~ ^{cunts} burned into the cooling balm of subterranean ink, being used by them, tormented for their whiteness, used as status like a bubbleroo or cold, gleaming ring: they would excuse pimps and pushers as alien denizens of a distant frozen sea, to ^{be} studied, caressed, understood. And a rat scurried in front of me, and my heart stopped ~~for an eternity~~ ^{which} when I saw what looked like a baby's severed arm in the rubble but turned out to be the plastic arm of a doll. And used scumbags, thrown from burned out windows high above came to light with each shovelful of stinking garbage. And bloody tampons. Laughter from a midnight party: lots of wine and weed and they passed a spoon and needles around. Sparing: not much H, just a little now. Honey, take down yo' drawers. Les see the pussy yo' hidin'. Sweating black

hands pull at her clothes: she quivers with laughter. Boy, is yo' gonna be sorry. Is yo' gonna be sorry. Hey man, she's on the rag! Looky here, looky that little string. That string rings the bell to my heart, boys. Any of yo' big men wanna give 'er a tug? Gimme that wine, boy. Gimme that bottle. The night's too hot fo' yo' t'be keepin' it to yo'self back there in the dark. Black legs with torn stockings spread high overhead on the couch. Her panties fall in a black heap on the floor. Whoa! This night's a scorcher. ~~Jimbo,~~ ^{Honey,} y'all open that shade there and let in some moonlight. C'mon, boy, let in some of that silver wind for my hot box. C'mon boys, momma's hot and ready. Who's gonna be the engineer on this train? Her fat thighs quivered. Her feet, calloused and horny, wriggled in anticipation. A shaky black ~~back~~ with with ruby cuff-links kneeled in front of her and his sweating purple hand with shiny nails reached for the string. Thass it, boy, yo' show momma yo' ain't no boy, no jive. Show momma now, sugar. He yanked it out, yellow and bloody and, after staring blankly at it, tossed it out the window. Do it now, honey, I loves it done now, I loves to leave yo' black cock all red and sticky, jes' like the fust time when I done it, so long ago, boy, so goddamn many years ago. Thass it, boy, stick that big meat right up me, ooh, thass it, right up, not so fass, boy, you'll see enough blood, yeh, jes' like you's doin', slow and easy, I'm yo' cherry, honey, see the blood? And then there was music, Latin and blues, piped along the street and we danced and the white girls danced, jiggling their undefiled tits in front of haunted, lusting eyes. And then an immensely fat black woman with one eye waddled into the street with a knife, tiny in her immense fat paw. She chased a man with the blade and he danced his lanky body out of her reach, taunting and protesting. She called him motherfucker and cocksucker and we white missionaries were all embarrassed by this intrusion of brutal reality into our fantasy. Then we got on the bus and left for our homes on the island, tired, filthy, smug: and that night a man on that block cut his woman, she needed thirty stitches, and some of her

blood splashed out the window onto the concrete where I had picked up the
 doll's arm. Their black faces, eyeballs and teeth, wide-nostrilled, vanish
 in mist: years and ages pass, fled from the jungle dank of primeval earth,
 matted forests sticky with the exudate of palm trees and locusts. Primitive
 man: wary and forbidding. Carving time out of earth tremors, followers of
 shadow. Huge stones hewn from granite mountains bear the serifs and acid
 etch of millenia. Look out upon the past, preserved in mica and crystal
 glints. Flecks of bloodpink feldspar. Touch the birth pang of a river valley,
 or the ancient caress of falling waters. How manifest the passage of time,
 how indelible the scars of metamorphosis. Yet of a magnitude which in terms
 of all that is otherwise so miniscule and brief. We bear our lives in weariness,
 wondering at our decay, looking sadly out upon the cactus and purple sunset,
 dragging our wens and wrinkles across the surface of this world. We cry out
 for slumber, for release. And bend and stumble and tremble at the clap of
 thunder, shudder at the chill of the rain. And hide. So much of human
 civilization has roots in fugitive terror. Shielding our nakedness. Walling
 ourselves in dark tombs to hide from the elements and the vengeance of the
 just gods. Earth: quaking and damp, haven for nocturnal beasts snarling
 defiance at the moon. Air: whipped into fury by heedless gods, home of the
 swooping hawk, the taloned pterodactyl, the invisible plague. Fire: spawning
 the mistletoe and imparting, for instants brief and wondrous, a shadow of
 divine power here below. Water: the silent element, father of vortexes, mother
 of life, embodiment of narcosis and sloth, my patron element from which I
 must emerge. Sleep paralyzes: the mind is acutely^{aware} of its surroundings, aware
 that it wishes to participate at that particular instant in the human intercourse
 around it, yet cannot pluck itself from sleep. Terror mounts, the heart and
 temples pound, awake, awake, move an arm, even a finger, bend at the neck,
 twitch to make yourself fall on the floor and be startled into motion: but
 nothing, nothing moves, nothing responds. You breathe just barely enough to

live, a living hell, plucked unwarranted and suddenly from the tablet of the world's affairs, yet denied the quietus of oblivion. So too water: the watery grave. Movements made sluggish, trying to run onto the beach to avoid a ravaging wave and the sucking undertow. Light filtered through a slime of green, suffocation, degraded into a wave-tossed pebble, eyes assaulted by weeds, splinters, bits of shell. Mother Ocean: an unseeing iron maiden suffocating me in her embrace. There lies the root of my sloth, carried like a salt sea spewed and churning in my veins with every heartbeat. Are we so far from the amoeba, encased in nutritive fluid, enabled to feel pain and reproduce, yet still trapped within the bubble of limitations, mindless floaters on the slide of a passionless god? The golden atom: translate myself to another level of existence, another plane of magnitude, I can do it. Therein lies my genius so repellent and obscure to most: translate myself into a timeless, spaceless totality, a realm where all is one, mind and body nourish each other. Few can follow, if any. Let me sink between atoms where eons pass in microseconds and poets carve their epics in an instant and wars slaughter millions with less than a drop of blood, yet a billion billion drops of blood. For our arrogance lies in the assumption that our frame of reference is supreme. This hurtling blue gem in the ether of night dictates by its motions the laws of the entire universe: absurd. How little I know about the propensity toward sluggishness within me and the somberness of my thoughts. What is this death wish that causes me to seek the black ether and vacuum in everything around me? Tell me your myths of atoms and mesons, weave the wind of solid and liquid and gas, sing out the electric fable of light as particle and wave. There is no harmonic fiber to your minstrelsy: just metaphor and symbol granting color and illusion to the emptiness of reality. Give me back the gods, adulterous and vital, and keep your empty vapors to yourself. Lies beget lies: implements of war, the shredding lie; alienation of men from society, the obsessive lie; man's fear of himself, the patriarchal lie. My sloth is a scab protecting me.

Rip it off, and my vital fluid drains. I hear the cries of a thousand gasping voices in the desert. Cries: no, cadenced moans disguised as chant and incantation. The overseer with ~~psant~~ and whip swaggers back and forth along the lines of sweating men and women. Their rags barely shield their leathered skins from the fierce sun. Yet they cannot turn lustful eyes upon each other until the cool of the night: dark coupling in mud flats and reedy swamps. Whips wail and crack: a man stumbles, scored and bleeding. He was too slow for the overseer's pleasure. The hewn granite block, massive on greased rollers, travels too sluggishly from the mountain that whelped it to the sands of the dead that beckon, ~~it~~. The overseer looks over his shoulder, fearful that the pharoah's emissary should pass at this moment, this nexus of time and space, and discover him ill at ease and unproductive. Let me be found resilient and triumphant. Let me pass before my lord in cloth of gold, not beggar's rags. Let me be seen at the height of my powers, not imbedded in stalemate. He pleads with the universe and wields more fiercely his only argument against destiny: the whip. From his lips to his gods, from their lips to their gods. Let us all be found amidst the fulfillment of our duty: then may we be judged. Silver disked desert moon: the cheeky face smiles upon the whispering couples stretched upon the sand. Lies they banter, yet their hearts swell and lies, in time, become truth, a truth far greater than the truth of their suffering. They learn the secret words that divide us from the beasts: that we make our own truth, we are not slaves; that we weave mystery out of passion and desire, not the cold glint of stars; that pain and pleasure do not redeem us without the intercession of dark forces summoned by the corpuscular grating of our blood. Why must we love like this, hidden from the very eyes of night? His black curls cast beams back into the moon's teeth. She lays her hair across his thick neck. These hours belong to us, they are made real by our love. Fate has stolen our happiness from us by day, commanding that we be born at this time and among these men: we retaliate by snatching moments from the loom of

destiny and making them our own, ~~will~~ing them with illusions of our own
 choice, illusions of love and pleasure, and nodding oblivion. My love for
 you is no illusion. It is real, more real than the dry twigs in which we
 sleep, more real than the bricks we bake by day. He sighs his loneliness
 to the stars. My dreams are dead when I can hold you close and still torment
 myself with thoughts of the ~~transitoriness~~ ^{fleetingness} of our love. You frighten me:
 don't ~~say~~ any more. Don't offend the blank stars and the soothing winds of
 night. I love you, whatever that ~~is~~ ^{means}, and in that love is my eternity. A
 woman knows about eternity, perhaps better than a man. She feels the rock and
 pitch of ages with her monthly bleeding, her frenzy to conceive, her lust for
 her lover's cock and hot seed, the twitch and cramping of her full womb. We
 know about eternity and what is real. Not battles nor dead words on dead
 parchment, nor the futile staring at an empty sky for an empty god. Men burn
 themselves with wild angers and frustrations, bred from false hopes and mere-
 tricious ambitions: they bear the brands in flaccid, spindly, aged bodies,
 stumbling toward death amidst the desert heat. Don't frighten me with your
 words of sorrow, your denials of reality and smug assertions of the nothingness
 of all. Perhaps you men are cylinders of air, like your cocks, flesh and blood
 wrapped around an empty tube. But that's why you are fools. My emptiness
 will be filled, and I will spill from the blood and water of fertility. I
 need you, and I love you and that gives you reality and that gives love reality.
 So hold me close, the desert night is chill, I command the truth, not you, not
 any of your kind, I fill you with meaning and watch with tears in my eyes as
 you shake your fist against the empty heavens and can't see how beautiful and
 whole I've made you. And the night of mystic ibis and quail and floating manna
 and the purple breach of the sea fade into timelessness. Along the water's
 edge papyrus reeds sway in the perfumed breezes, the salt, corrosive mist of
 sweat and sea. And the granite mass glints half-formed in the moonlight. A
 coterie of priests walk the sands, uneasy, listening for sighs and breathings
 from the heavens, picking through fluted and bulbous entrails for omens,

watching the skies for meteors and comets. Dead, they bind the pharaoh in linen, soaked corpse and bilious greybloat, bedecking the tomb with jewels and statuettes of gods, and the corpses of slaves. And his bride stands upon the altar veiled in royal blue silk, electric in the moonlight. He is dead, he died before his time, frail, thin-blooded, whispered victim of assassins, so young a corpse. His tomb is half finished and the son of Ra is dead. She passes like a breeze through delta reeds, the priests, jewelled and fat with oily skin parting before her. Gold anklets clatter with the soft padding of her fine-boned feet. Incantations are mumbled and she bends her body beneath the upraised blade of the high priest. Against custom, he bids her rise and lay fully stretched upon the onyx altar, beneath ^{the} dog-faced statue of Thoth. Surprise plays across her face, but she submits. His mouth dries, he swallows his next commands, spittle flies from his shrinking lips. She knows now. All those months of lust in his eyes, the months in which she heard his fat, jewelled ankles haunting the pillared halls behind her: turning, there was nothing. He dared not follow her to the bath, not even he, with all his temples and gold and grain. So now beneath the aegis of the double-horned goddess and the mighty moon, he would reveal her nakedness to himself for one final illuminating, impassioned moment before she joined her king. Two Nubians, sleek, perfumed, their black skin oiled like statuary, approached her supine body and unfastened the gold clasps at her shoulders. They trembled. The populace whispered and gasped and bowed their heads, shrinking from the imagined flood of fire that would fall from the heavens upon this sacrilege. He looked into her turquoised eyes and felt his knees go weak. A queen: she could demand retribution for his final blasphemy when at last his turn came to enter the river of ink and murk. Her eyes loomed deep and passionless before his that were weak and watery. She almost laughed out loud, almost choked with laughter in the teeth of death, looking into his eyes, seeing there the fire, the fear, the human and mortal anguish that cast all sanctity to the ashes in vain search

for quiescence and relief. With his own jeweled and polished hands he pulled her veiled garment off her shoulders and down past her feet, her eyes locked onto his. That absurd vein stood out against his forehead, throbbing. He pulled his eyes from the attraction of her face that had become a regal mask and stared at the small globes of her breasts, with their roughed and scented nipples, at her sequined navel, at her plucked and powdered genital mound and lips, the genitals of a child. He burned to pry them apart, to taste their pink wetness, to have her squirm in godly frenzy, weak with passion, uncontrolled, beneath his hands and lips. She stared at him coldly, then her face broke into a smile of mild amusement: I will curse your soul from beyond the river of the dead, priest, if you dare violate the sanctity of my corpse. A shriek shattered the mumbled, throaty incantations of his fellows, he plunged the shining dagger into her chest, avoiding the beauty of her breast. And she could laugh and laugh and choke on her own blood as she laughed at the frenzied chagrin of the priest in his struggle against his animal nature and the hypocrisy of his divinity. But she died silent, respecting the solemnity of Isis' divinity, the sanctity of the realm of the dead. A queen. And eons passed, and a thousand thousand kingdoms of stone and filigreed metal fell to dust, before a portion of her spirit lighted upon me, here in my dark room facing the stone walled alley lights, the cheap glare of dull bulbs, carving my bed into shadows, my body into a lax and shredded knot of blood and sinew. Feminine longings melt through my limbs and groin: I puke with eternity, the pitch and yaw of planets. Moons. Tiny spheres shattering the topaz murk of my lassitude. And the night fills with sounds, echoing music, long drawn out blues, somber latin laments. I stretch and curl my legs, my lungs fill. My hand brushes gently against my dream-hardened cock, filled to bursting with seed and spasms of pleasure. A woman: I look down at hard muscles turned to soft breasts with taut pink tips. I luxuriate across an altar of satin, a votive offering of smiles and intense shudders to the Poetess. My cunt wakes

beneath a canopy of golden soft fur, scintillating in the torchlight. She enters the chamber, black-robed and bearing a thousand tiny mirrors woven into her translucent veil. She is the goddess of night panoplied in stars. Her eyes are comets flung far afield, careening wildly in the fantastic light. I moan waiting to be shriven by the gentle touch of her fingers, the palps of darkness and slumber, ghostpale in torchlight. She reaches me and shakes her galaxy of mirrors from her shoulders: falling tinkling to the floor. Her nipples are long and taut and deeply red: mine are small and taut and pink. She touches my breasts. I dare reach up and brush her face with my finger, her flaming nipples with my tongue. Great blessing of Tiresias: to be a woman and hold a woman close, feeling her soft skin slide into my cunt, the hard bone of her longest finger sliding against soft skin, feeling the rings of muscles in my cunt, feeling them contract in waves, feeling the oily juice of my passion spill onto her delicate hand, feeling the brief bite of her nail against my urethra, squeezed and hidden in flesh, tempting me to flood her mouth with body-warmed gold, her tiny tongue tip flicking my clitoris, my large and bulbous clitoris, flushed with all the passion of my soul. And above us float the isolated strains of Sappho's lyre, her warm voice summoning her lovers, her friends, to celebrate the sensual beauty of the night: the blue and basking soothing of the summer Aegean sea. Rocky cliffs, sprinkled with random rooting scrub, beckon the distraught lover to the perilous edge. So long has he been far from my bed, drawn to war and storm winds and hostile foreign lands. I have born his child in solitude, without the comforting touch of his hand: I have kissed the bow he left behind, that felled the fleet buck and the raging boar: I have carried myself in honor like a nobleman's wife beset on all sides by treason and lechery. Take this burden from me, grey-eyed goddess or sombre virgin. I have borne it too long. My flesh and will grow weak. My son has grown into a man and deserves to bear upon his shoulders the laurel of his heritage, not the mockery of alienation and scorn within his own banquet hall.

How often he paces the night, muscles clenching, furious to slay the lot of them. And how like his father he looks, the young suitor with youthful curling beard who took me from my father's house with his glib tongue and flashing eyes, as he roams the fields in the moonlight lamenting the wasted corn and depleted flocks. Dare I whisper the thoughts the beauty of my son have given rise to in the depths of my loneliness, when my head in solitude presses against the great stuffed bridal cushion that was carefully sewn and ~~stuffed~~ ^{padding} for the pleasure of two? I think of his lean waist with lust and choke with every ripple of his young thighs: O answer my prayers, goddess, before I offend my soul and your sight with the ~~the~~ ^{sweet} blossom of my sinfulness. Show me his sails bounding over the horizon from distant shores or grant me the courage to hurl myself from these rocks to sweet destruction far below. She gazes far out upon the sea, the wind twirling her hair and garments, and I stretch against the sheets in the stark bulb-glare of alley night. Motionless are we twin spirits. Whispers beckon and I turn, looking over my shoulder, secure within the magic circle inscribed with a multitude of symbols and Hebrew characters, and stare at the stranger behind me. He smirks, mocking the fumes from my crucible. A pretty trick that pudgy toy. Most adept charlatan you are. How proud you must be of your skill: until you face the quintessence of dark necromancy, I, the conjuror. You mortals don't mean to, with your postures and humpbacked scholarship and wax and wood gone in a week, but you make me laugh. Indeed, though I know our fates are inextricably bound to one another for all time, I must laugh, I feel no kinship. I have renounced an existence a billion times greater than the paltry lusts and visions you conceive, even in ~~you~~ ^{your} most spiritual moments. And still you seek to smoke me out with smoldering shit and congealed crystals of piss and your chattering hags and lustful old maids who'll sell you a root or charm or potion merely for a peek at your stiff prick, a single instant holding it in their hands dreaming dreams of past failures, losses, weakness of words, caressing the purple head. They hope

to tempt it to spurt out seed ^{for} which they will ^{spill} rush onto the floor, falling on watered knees, to lap up like mangy dogs. I try to turn from his eyes, return to the fog and chill of my lethargy, renounce the sparking red fire and the glowing dwarf. He smiles, eyebrows arched, impish. Again a charm gaps between my soul and my self. Such esoteric distinctions: our impoverished tongues choke vainly, trying to capture the essence of a thought in words. Like ants we pile bits of bone and teeth to shelter the labyrinth of our dark minds from the blazing sun. I seek, in my lassitude, to establish the core of myself, for without that I cannot move. There is that within me, inutterable, a core of myself, that remains despite the weathering of years. Was it bred in early years of curious, unthinking joy, or the product of a thousand generations of disembowelled monarchs and warriors? The strutting woman, passing me with a smile, turning her eyes to me with a bedroom slant: she takes me from myself, thrusts me into a role I neither planned nor sought, playing with my lust and vital puke. Yet, something within me urges me on: this, too, is you, to fill her cunt with hot sperm, seed of delta swamp. I walk out into the daylight, seeking myself, seeking to be sought, eager to surrender to the goddess who guides my star. At night I rage that the moon has abandoned me. I feel foolish that I ever thought I was her special servant, cupbearer to her silver arms and platinum hair. Then the sun blinds me with her grandeur: I am lost, consumed in daylight that obscures my chosen servitors, the stars. So I recline on moist grass, a mote of dust suspended between flame and ice, between myself and myself, seeking an identity that thwarts me. Then the lassitude, the resignation, that we poor creatures dash like hamsters on a wheel, spewing energy and vital juices in a fruitless race toward enlightenment. We drown ourselves in dreams. Dreams fill our nights with shallow terrors and empty visitations. That face. Wind chimes herald a west wind blowing through the alley. A cat in heat moans like a lost infant, an infant soul in limbo crying out to shattered parents. Dark is the night, and chill the mind that dreams through it. A face emerges, the eyes, I've seen the eyes, but

the mouth appears now through the mist, a mouth of infinite tenderness. Broad lips stretch across firm white teeth: the smile of a savage, though benevolent, demon. The canines are pronounced, belying the tender sensuousness of the lips. Lips and eyes. Still the vision forms, it has a night or an instant to form, be seen, and disperse in the alley's mist. The dead dream thus: relieved of life's fever, untenanted by passion or remorse, the archetypes of the soul rouse themselves from grey tombs and rise to dance through the eternal night. Final thoughts linger, become transformed, and join the ~~countless~~ ^{countless} motes of dead intellect that float throughout the galaxy. Solar wind: the vehicle of dead thought. In agonies of death, we understand: and then our understanding joined the flotilla of ideas adrift since the cloud of beginning. Is that blood on the lips? Its? The blood of another? My blood, sucked from within by this vampire, this haunting vision. Black slitted mouth: blood. Birth blood, ~~stream~~ meandering through a thousand generations. I see her stretched before him, eyes shut tight in pain, squeezing. Her abdomen pulses and sways, meloned and bloated, echoing to his tapping fingertip. Water gushes down her legs and the night becomes a frenzy of movement, taxi meter clicks, the skull plates flattened and wrenched to outwit the restraining womb, plunges out and down. I was that baby and that father and the wincing mother, sharing in spirit the howling night. What joy is birth. He looked out over the East River into the golden sunrise and thanked it softly, a holy moment. Another moment and then numbness, a shiver against the morning chill, his arms hugging himself furtively. But my eyes slid askance, and my teeth picked at dead skin lingering on my lower lip: father forsaken. The concept of wombfruit has found voice: she seduces with her utter impotence, and I stand staring into the golden sun lonely and afraid. Love isn't cheap like a platitude stitched in needlepoint, or a page of the Daily Word. It rides only with miracles and overwhelms only with the arduous filamentation and coalescence of necessity and magic. I stare at my daughter feeling the distance between us, the eons

and parsecs of distance that we must bridge together. And the growing separation between my wife and myself: growing like the gap between her legs, spewing pain, magic and mystery, and also, I suppose, the ~~cool~~ ^{cool} balm of reconciliation. Alley lights upset my drifting thoughts, darkening this mad, endless sleep: I see other mothers, bellies swollen, hearts swollen with eagerness, fear, and love, sending demons out of their cunts: warped babies, twisted, spineless, polyploid gestur~~es~~ and clut~~hing~~ ^{ing}. A pointed head turns to me and slanted, listless eyes nod into mine. What agony this tragic abortion of hope: and I dissolve in tears. God pray for those babies, those wailing souls shielded from the glory of the silver moon, launched into spacedust and eternal night. Those travesties of life, enflamed for an instant, wondering, credulous, then lapsing into the serenity of living death. My hands curl in front of my chest, clasped as in prayer. My knees draw up to my chest. The night chills the sheets and I shudder beneath a cold film of sweat. Mansmells and feversmells: life's abundance. But that abundance ages and withers, shrinking, succumbing to the encroaching winds and waves. An old man rests in a wicker chair, drawing on a cob pipe: ~~an archetype from my dreams.~~ ^{le} (H)is words bely the tranquillity apparent in his granite age. Men I have killed (n) my violent and jagged youth. These hands, swollen and spotted, once throttled throbbing necks, enemies of the state. Glossy ~~cylinders~~ ^{barrels} of steel and aluminum, sophisticated alloys chosen for lightness and durability, and precision cylinders, beds for sleek bullets, filled secret crevices within my suits, and niches within the walls of my home. My home: a tiny apartment, cheap and old, I have grown into it, meeting it halfway, ^{le} (W)e are both worn shells, delapidated, waiting for the final lights to fade: it, for the iron wrecking ball, I, for the secret silent bullet slashing through the still night. He drinks from a carafe of water: his hands tremble, spilling. I die slowly, envying the swift death I dealt others, awaiting the stab of metal into my midnight flesh. Gord's face: a grimace through the sight, a black period punctuating his high fore-

head. Carson: pompous and fat in the plush drawing room ogling the obscene gyrations of his naked captive, a foe's daughter, chained to a puppet machine with controls at his seat. How his pig's face chortled and snorted, his minute hard-on lost in the folds of his flesh. I always wondered how that fat man could fuck: I learned how he could die. My wire wrapped around his neck, cutting into his flesh, deeply into the folds of fat, scored zebra bands of red that swelled and dripped onto his collar. His obscene tongue stuck out like a vomited tumor, purple and glistening. He scratches his moldy face with palsied fingers, picking at an itch that exists only in his mind. I see that macabre scene in that drawing room: plush carpets muffle all sounds, keeping everything respectable: the dancing woman wide-eyed with glee, the silent shadowed killer as ineluctable as time. I left her dead as well, her blood splattering the wall, a gaping cunt wound in her left breast. The machine was still on when I left. Regrettable business, but she had seen too much. And I didn't care about her, she wasn't a satellite among the stars of my mind. And now I wait. I pray. My voice sings with the stars, old and eternal, ~~dragging~~ bearing weathered flesh on my knitted bones. My words are too grand for this modern age, this age that has killed epic poetry and eternal virtues. The quick tale, like the quick hamburger and the quick trip past the majesty of summer mountains, characterizes our empty age. Preface: theme: development: restatement: perhaps a coda. Too pat, too eagerly grasped by aging professors whose minds can only deal with categories and logical progressions. Mine is the way of the Meander, sinuing through time and space, broad and slow, picking over pebbles and wyeing their gleam, simply for the sake of their random beauty. The explosion of stars: beauty ethereal and translucent, eternally pressed against the coal-tar platform of deepest space. My mind explodes, resilient, through this sleep of life, sparkled by alleylight and beads of sweat. It spills like water on a sidewalk, filling invisible crevices until, after motion ceases, a glistening design is spread before wondering eyes, a

beauty of scattering, that simply is, without other end. It ends when this
 night of sloth and the silver vibratto lunations end, the silver light that
 moves the tendrils of my dreaming mind. I wish him to die, to meet a merciful
 end swiftly in spite of his mad evil. But he sits scratching his face,
 picking at filaments of conscience and trying to throw them off ^{on} to the floor.
 Torment: I pick at the filaments of my brain, at the filaments of my emotions,
 I seek to understand my self, my strengths and weaknesses. Can it all be
 futile, this frenzied coalescence of atoms that is me, without purpose or form?
 Formlessness: how we gyrate and make faces in mirrors to avoid that terror.
 I laugh and embrace it. I can turn my giant mind and crystal eyes into that
 formless mass of myself and perceive form and purpose and eternity. A plane
 of being unthought before. Adventure is mind alive, probing other minds,
 coupling with other bodies in riot and abandon. Those naked bodies sliding
 slowly into the bathwater pool: women with curved bodies, bobbing breasts,
 dark pubic triangles. And the men, mostly twisted and flabby though some young
 and lean and virile. But the haunted lustful eyes: burning fires within, a
 search to realize an impossible fantasy of sensuousness, a quest doomed to
 frustration and compromise. I will not compromise. I rage with Lear in the
 storm of the universe: let the lightning spill its deadly flame on me, ^{let} ~~at~~ the
 cinders of myself scatter with the gentlest breeze. I quest in a world that
 has sterilized all quests except ^{that of} ~~the quest~~ for wealth. And wealth is innately
 sterile. Bricks of gold rest in the Shah's coffers and millions of brown,
 sandstrewn people starve, fed ~~only~~ by gehenna. Gold bricks in dark coffers:
 no sparkle, no jewelry-sheen, cold, implacable, black as night, sterile. How
 hot this night of dream. Like my lust for women's bodies, this moon-soaked
 night claws at my loins. Speak to me, succubus, of the night. Don't
 simply spill my seed with your burning thighs and nibble my neck with quick
 lips. Speak to me, fill me with the labyrinth of your mind, that mystic
 road that permeates your limbs and swells your flesh with lust and life. Be

one with me, for gentle seconds, not a receptacle nor a thieving harridan,
 be my comfort and solace. But she passes me in the dark night, I feel her
 wasp wings brush my face: hovering. Will she? Images spill from me like
 shit, convoluted as I am convoluted, some brief and floating, some heavy that
 sink deeply. Such is my art: to renounce art and discover the mystery that
 is me. Let others follow: lost souls stranded on the wast of our shores,
 huddling behind wet rocks, racked by longings unfulfilled. The tired husband,
 hating his work, living only for Friday's check, tomorrow's pension, dubious
 ease in golden years wracked with sickness and neglect. The bored wife, pur-
 poseless in a gadgeted house, staring at the four walls of prosperity, her
 loins aflame seeking life. Follow me: my dream embraces you, it sucks you as
 well as me from the mire of sloth. Final frontiers: not the stars. He that
 walks past you. She that turns coldly from your stare. These are frontiers
 conquered only by the harmony of mind and body if conquered at all. She found
 me at a demonstration, a march against war. She sat by me in my car, parked
 in a Long Beach lot, and we talked and she pulled my hands to her young breasts,
 saying it was all right, and to her cunt. My heart soared with surprise and
 pleasure: so beautiful, and willing, and unpretentious. ~~Soon~~ She gave herself
 to me, ~~sacrificing fifteen years of virginity far beyond her~~, renouncing in
 her flashing fire the narrowness of chastity, her wild mind bursting the bonds
 of her solitary body, eager to be joined with mine. And I worshipped at the
 shrine of her body, as would a thousand others. She slid a moist condom over
 my throbbing cock and when we had fucked and sunk into each other's arms
 she drew me cold and shrivelled from her body and spilled my come from the
 swollen nipple onto her smooth girl's stomach. She spread the sticky liquid
 with light hands looking into my eyes with wonder, looking at my bloodied
 cock with wonder, looking at the strands of semen stretched between her out-
 spread fingers with wonder. Speak to me of wonders and dreams. Share your
 mysteries you who are so like a god. My hair fell in long gold curls upon

my shoulders and sparkled in the flickering candlelight. She tounhed my
 muscled body add wispy golden beard, thinking me a god. She sucked the blood
 from my cock, bending over my thighs and I caressed her ass, fingering the
 dark ~~myself~~ hole. She trembled. Lost warriors on a silent battlefield, covered
 by mist and darkness, shunned by the salubrious sunlight. We grope for each
 other on hadds and knees, seeking a friend to love, a foe to smash, a polarity
 to ~~for~~ ^{join} our lax and grublike selves into ~~motion~~ purposeful motion. So easy
 to live a lie, to believe in sacraments and sanctions and false morality. Tell
 me, tell me, tell me how to live. How to die. They look coldly into your
 eye and speak in whispers: gentle whispers of the dead. And this... but then
 you see... to be ^{truly} a man... dedicated to good... that is the only path
 to happiness... Happiness: let it speak for itself. Lady Flower, born of
 evangelical fanatics, was tied as a child with her hands above her head each
 night as she slept so she would not touch herself. A child's dream: first
 stirrings of her body and her mind: pollution. Then, withered and weeping,
 an old maid lonely and frightened by the multifarious couplings of others,
 she cried to me for solace. My life has passed and I find I'm filled with
 sorrow. As a child they told me I had a calling. A child can't have a calling.
~~Rarely can an adult know when he is called.~~ And for their sterile fantasies
 and dreams of sainthood, I am now old and ugly and lost in a labyrinth of
 temptations and regrets. Send me my minotaur: my bull-man from the central
 darkness, send him to me puffing and sweaty, his muscles wet and bulging, his
 skin hot. Send him to me so I can twist the curl^s of his furred skull in my
 fingers, weaving loveknots. Send him into my night, filling my cold and empty
 frailness with his iron thighs and heaving chest. Send him into my dark
ⁿⁱght snorting and tossing his horns, his cock stiff with warm blood, his balls
 full and tight ~~muscles~~, primed to fill my emptiness with his bull's seed.
 Send him into my unrumpled bed to use me obscenely, making me a woman, ~~fucking~~
~~me hard and deeply.~~ Send him to make me bleed and moan and scream with ecstasy.

Fill my night with the light of his passion. Minotaur: the beast within,
 chained in darkness and stench. When I lay beneath the weights and press,
 my muscles taut and shivering with strain, and the iron ingots rise slowly
 over my head, I nourish my bullidh self, soothe it, keep it strong yet gentle
 and still. And the fury of the moon rouses it to pawing passion and I toss
 in the night, nights like this night of sweat and fevered visions, and the
 bull is unchained, gouging my eyes, goring my brain. My quiescent body,
 gently twitc hing, masks the fury and pounding within. Such is the distinction
 between surface and reality. That face: again it appears out of mist, I see
 it, dark-browed, dark-eyed, shaggy. Minotaur? No, but close. A man's face
 yet different, bearded, furred, primitive. Its dark eyes look into mine,
 heroic yet imploring. The teeth: the same teeth as before exposed in a slight
 cynical smile, thick teeth, yellowed like a lion's, ^{meat-eating} ~~a carnivorous~~ ~~beast's~~ teeth,
 hardened and polished by chewing and tearing into fresh-killed flesh. Flecks
 of dried animal blood spatter his beard. Animal lust: booted, uniformed,
 implacable as a stone. When we camped on the mountain I looked at her with
 her baby. She cuddled it ^{to} ~~at~~ her small, ^{swollen} ~~flowing~~ breast. Her head was that of
 an ancient Egyptian ~~but~~: round, big-eared, small-mouthed, homely. Her body
 in its youthful slimness was seductive. I could feel within me the smoldering
 of the flames that had leaped in th at ^{fed} ~~soldier~~ who raped her. Should I hate
 the child? Should I hate the child because I despised his father for that one
 instant of torment? I have dismissed the father from my mind. My baby remains
 and I can only love him. I turned, looked across the valley toward the other
 mountains. Many-breasted Gaea, great mother of us all: embracing us all, the
 good, the evil, the despondent non-entities. Shall I leave my son in the woods,
 to die, to be reared by wolves and found a race of conquerors? Let him stay
 with his mother, let me purge his blood of the half-measure of serpent's venom
 that pollutes. I will transform him with my milk and the honey of my kisses.
 She turned from me and I walked toward a meadow filled with flowers. And bees

filled the air with the zzz of their wings, hovering above the stamens and pistils, luxuriantly fertile. And so the rhythm of life continues. Offspring, weak and pitiable, staring absurdly through too-large glasses or wiping snot onto their sleeves, are sheltered by a mother's love. And they rise to separate and couple and rear offspring themselves. And the mother sinks into the past, a ghost of childhood like first love and haunted houses, sometimes with smiles, sometimes with tears, sometimes with anger and fear erecting an impenetrable wall stretching over millenia. For we pulse our essences out into the void, like stars or electromagnetic fields, pulses that as yet bear no name, wear no label, but exist as certainly as our brute ancestors are borne by each of us within the most intimate fragments of our nucleic and genetic heritage. Monsters and demons existed then, coupled with humanoids new-risen from the sea, the giants in the earth. They reappear in nightmarish and hushed visitations that pounce upon the unwary, and as dwarves and freaks and mongoloids and cretins. And we who are normal gasp in horror softened by pity, for we know, without daring to admit it, that we bear the potentiality within us to whelp such mad beasts. A hundred Bacchantes dance before me, stimulating me to rise and mate, flirting their shaved or furry cunts and smooth thighs at my lustful eyes. They chant, and lift their breasts to me, to all men. Bearers of Kings, bearers of monsters, they are mistresses of the fertile world, ~~the fecund world~~ the oasis of increase in the midst of barren introspection and intellectuality. They dance obscenely, yet beautifully, aware of their enchantments. They tease me, curl my hair with soft tapering fingers, brush erect nipples across my lips, caress my surging testicles, play with the golden ring in my ear, making it flash in the sun. But what of the woman who is not the abandoned Bacchante? The plain woman, with simple breasts, perhaps oddly shaped, perhaps with sagging skin that belies her youth? The woman who smells from infection, or the anxious woman redolent of false essence? The woman lost in a search for values, identity, a meaning in this mad world

where shy minds are wracked by heaving, lusting bodies. My body and soul opens
 to the troubled women, the real women washed in the blood of the scapegoat,
 the women harmonic, fluid, the comic and tragic muses. Bacchanted, away, with
 your eyes of tired flame, your breasts softened by the brutal press of a
 thousand Centaur hands. Come to me, eyes of wonder, eyes of longing, eyes
 that are mirrors of the soul. The Queen of women rests, reclining on a bed
 of moss and periwinkles, her hands crossed under her chin. She reclines on
 her stomach but reveals the profile of her naked breast and the swell of her
 turned hip. Luxuriant and gold, her hair falls along her back and tapers,
 curling, over her waist. She turns and lies flat on her stomach and the globes
 of her bottom smile at the sun... Kallipygos. Daughter of the Severed Phallos.
 Bride of the Wind, child of the wave. Too much, too much this rending heart
 must bear. Lamentations and lover's tears borne through time, through eons,
 dimensionless, floating: love, love lost, love unrequited, love unknown, love-
 less, love. Sinking, my sleep overwhelms me, losing foothold, point of refer-
 ence, balance, images: vomit of images, rescue me, teach me love, the nature
 of love, teach me what it is not, sweet mother goddess, sweet sensuous goddess
 of the sea and the raging moon: hold me, hold me, hold me there, don't let
 me slip away... Away. Lost. And a gnarled grey tree rises from the heath,
 scanty-leaved, solitary. An aged tree with roots cast down to the birth of
 the world. Far in the distance the torch flames serpentine through the cloud-
 filled night. Macabre chants, basso profundo, float on the chill wind. Slowly
 the robed Druids approach the ancient tree, materializing out of mist and
 lustreless shade, their torches smoking and crackling. Wet wood sizzles
 as shreds of cloud sink on the procession: the sizzle of roasted blood. The
 chant: closer, throaty, profound. Taut, thick vocal chords, vibrate deeply
 deep, shivering the night cats from their branches. Systole, diastole: the
 rhythm of the chant, like great poetry and incantation, is in phase with the
 rhythm of the human ^{pumping} ~~pumping~~ heart, the bellows lung. Mystic words, unrecogniz-

able. I long to join them. Tell me the words: their meaning, their incantatory syllables. Krishna: say it and the goddess materializes dancing on the tongue. What unholy demons dance on the tongues of these robed Druids? It's cold, so very cold on the heath: the wind whips across the tall grasses, masturbates the ancient tree, then flies on to greet the warlocks' thatched cottages and the monkey-dancers' ~~dancing~~ pit, swirling sand. Great bulbous clouds part like swollen cunt lips whelping the silver smiling face of the full moon. Masked faces: women heads resembling animals, a cow, a horse, a savage night cat, a moon-loving wolf. Faces hidden from the demons and spirits that ride the sea of air this all-hallowed night, this night of retribution and eerie visitation. No father, I'll not show myself your daughter to be tormented. I loved him and you couldn't abide that, you wanted me for yourself. You resented his youth, youth that was once yours but slipped through your fingers, you resented his beauty, beauty you once shared but lost with toil and age. I can't hate you for how you felt: it was beyond any willingness on your part, just as my love for him was beyond my willing. So I join the others, haunted by the dead, and hide my face beneath this bear's head of reeds and woven grasses, and I shall pass the night shrinking unknown away from you until you return to the earth where we laid you, to twist and fume another year, waiting to hunt me out this night. And I shall be hidden again. Higher voices join the chant: contrapuntal rhythms, lungs to heart, slapping rain to whistling wind. My love, now in death I'm sure you know how I slipped from you those lonely nights when you tossed on your mattress convulsed with sickness. Those lonely nights when you were lost to me, delirious, unfeeling, babbling nonsense into your pillow. So many months I watched by your side, tortured, impotent. Then time and custom played their parts, making me quiescent, building within me a resiliency that made me hold on to life and the living world and abandon, for sweet brief hours, that bed of pain and death. How withered you became: your beauty sank from your face like melting snow,

sinking deep into your skull bones, leaving nought but wrinkles and grey crusts. Your body, once so tempting in the bright hayfields, shrank to bone ensacked in skin, dry skin, the stiff dry skin of a beast. Your breasts, so full and round, sunken now to old hag paps: I never saw your cunt those last terrible months. Probably scrofulous. How I wept for you, my love, how I missed the warmth and love in your voice, the guidance you afforded me, the gentle touch of your hand on my face. You were brave at first, so strong, you stilled my weeping with painful smiles and flashing eyes. And I loved you more than ever I loved anything, more than I had ever loved you or myself. But then the curse grew more horrid and grim, mind left you and you were you no more: a rotting bag of corpse-gas, breathing still, mumbling now and then. But not you. The healer could do nothing: no exorcism could drive the demon off. Long before your death you were irrevocably lost to me and I became a thing, a clod of mud, a coreless lump. Then one night I looked from your bedside out upon the glorious moon and smelled the spring scent of night mating and heard the animal clicks and scratches that signified the propagation of life throughout the dried winter heath, the entire world. And I left your side and wandered, lusting, hunting life like a stunned animal, and I found her, lost like me, and lusted my way back from the sterile realm of the dead into the crystal sphere of the living. One day I too will join you, shadowless and insubstantial, floating on the night wind. But not now: my time is not yet come, my living is not yet done. So I hide from your wrath beneath this robe and mask, thinking you understand and are not angry, if you were alive you would have understood, but I am not sure. We are all unsure, and we know that the dead can read the most secret hearts of the living and we fear that nakedness and vulnerability. I pray you still love me as I still love the memory of you as you once were, not ravaged and mad with demons. As the years pass you will see me age and wither and dodder and grow mad myself, eager to fling away the tatters of flesh that bind me to this heath and my farmer's life. And I pray you will pity me the

same as I did you, sinking into your too-horrible decline. A circle of torches
 and bent heads formed around the tree, chanting. Lost we all are fearing the
 unknown. So many years I've led them up this hill, my chest swollen with night
 air and incantations. Soon they shall hide their faces from me, thinking each
 in his own way that they have offended me, sinned against my troubled
 soul. Such children we are, lost in this moist wilderness, blaming ourselves
 for the infinitude of tragedy that sweeps the earth. They come to me for
 solace and I give them what I can, but I know less than they : I fear my
 comforting is weak. Too old, too old and gnarled, like this holy tree, too
 pressed by time and wind. I, too, have cast my roots down into the earth's
 mad fires and the affairs of men, the rhythms of life no longer interest me.
 The other old ones, like myself, foolish in these masks, hiding from spirits
 we no longer fear, spirits we care nothing about, freezing our old bones on
 this chill heath-night. Let death take me, let me ride the winds. Be certain,
 fools, all my scores and vengeance have long since settled into the dust of
 oblivion. But you will find some petty crime, some chance ill-considered
 thought to torment yourselves with and you will hide from me as well, probably
 this night next year, thinking I pursue you with snapping serpent-tongue and
 venomous wing. The night of the sea: the breaking of the waves upon the rocks.
 A road of silver leads to the moon: I see the wandering jew reflected on the
 silver face, bearing the sticks that cursed his life. Thalatta: she calls to
 me, encased in steel and plaster cubes, twitching on a bed strewn with alley
 light. It's never really dark here like it must be at sea on a moonless night
 filled with clouds. Lulled by the throb of waves, tempted toward oblivion.
 Ultimate blackness: eyes wide but unseeing: a blind man. The sea swells within
 me: my thick blood, lapping the curves of my arteries and veins, splashing
 against my fingertips. Great mother: I feel you nourishing me when I struggle
 against the immutable iron weights of the furious ~~se~~news of my opponent on the
 mat. I feel your throb and salt caress. You fill me with ageless vigour and
 destiny. Unlike Odysseus who carried his home within him while he was exiled

upon the waves, I carry you, great mother, within me while I am exiled upon this still and torpid shore. Such is the one who wishes to spend his brief living years discovering hidden meanings and quintessences. Oh, to be satisfied with mute ignorance and pace the corridors of life heedless of the sun and storm outside. But no, I rush to the windows, throwing them wide, filling my lungs with salt spray. I wander amidst fantasy and comets, my brainpan swells to engulf this bubble universe: all is my domain, I adhere to no limits. I am nothing, I play no part, I mimic no sounds or words on cue, I build no monuments to be gawked at and scribbled on by wondering and malicious children. I am not one who serves civilization: civilization serves me. Like a faceted diamond I absorb the random light of the universe and send it forth sparkling, hypnotic, mystical. And this modern Patroclus looks up at me from the chair where he sits reading, watching me lost in thoughts of comets and worms, the immensity of the universe. And he smiles and beckons, yet I resist, staring out into the blue daylight. He touches me, squeezing my muscles, rubbing the ache from them, soothing. And we kiss, he holds me close and presses his lips against my neck, his tongue flicking my skin. I touch his nipples with my teeth and all thoughts of philosophy and stars and universes brushing universes are ^wiped from my mind. I return to the primal world of sense and lust, and I tempt his cock with gentle fingers, filling it with blood, making it rise throbbing and firm in my hand. He moans and touches me, and I sigh and my cock stiffens and he sucks it lovingly, slowly, with long tongue strokes and my mind blanks ~~out~~ into interior vision, I see ~~nothing~~ but the shards of swirling images bouncing through the neurons of my brain, swirled by pleasure and tension and the dream of ultimate release. We both come, our sturdy ^emate seed unites in a thick wash of spurting pleasure, and we sink, at last, into the oblivion of repose, my mind returning to the stars and his to dreams of me. So you think it's so goddamned easy being an artist, huh? Breams? Why, you don't know the half about dreaming. My nights are so filled with colors and motions

that I need an afternoon ⁷nap to get some rest. You think it's easy schlepping these paint cans from the hardware store up here five flights to this roach-infested loft? Then spreading out the linen and getting all this shit all over myself as I splash it around. And the stink of linseed oil and turpentine: God. Why, sometimes it takes me a whole afternoon to finish a painting. And then nobody understands the splashes and drips and smears. Oh, they buy it and pay a good price for it, but do they understand it? Not on your life. My dreams? Shit, I forget 'em. They bother me because they ^{are} like doors that open into my brain and I don't like looking ~~that deeply~~ inside of me. Sure, these are voices I can hear with my inner ear: we all can. I sometimes hear the sea or a comet flashing through the solar system or I hear sometimes in the night a woman's voice within me like she was struggling to get out. But hell, I haven't got the time to worry about those apparitions. I don't know what they mean and nobody else does, buddy, I'll tell you that, so I forget them. What? No, their randomness doesn't hold any message for me. In fact I've gotta forget them and remember my car payments and the rent and my new clothes in order to finish a painting. And they love me, man. The critics love me, they say I'm ^{great}, they say the century is speaking through me. Imagine that. So I guess I am great: I mean what's to say, really. Oh, I'm not worried about surviving. I'm no Michelangelo. I've no concerns about the future. I should worry about whether they'll still admire me a thousand years from now? Listen, buddy, a thousand years from now this whole fucking planet'll be barren: from plague and pollution or war, or just abandoned. So I should worry? Hell no, I'm making my waves now, drinking, fucking, singing, just living like there's not gonna be a tomorrow. And show me who's gonna slight me for it. Saddened by the ire spilled through the vesicles of my groin, I ponder growth. From where: to where: a limitless chain unfastened, flapping in the wake of comets and plagues. Like Pecos Bill, I stay the sidewinder of my fate with flourishes at art, yet when my hand opens there is nothing but

air and empty starlight. What is art but the definition of a person's growth, a psychic instant captured, molded, made eternal, discernible and meaningful only to the creator. To create for others, to hope they can understand, to hope they will participate in the bubbling vision of the universe that courses through the artist's veins is to hope for a transm^{ig}ration of nucleic acids and a transposition of time, space, and experience. I confront myself in my capsuled dream: a twisted vision that reveals depths and haunted recesses, roosts for bats and tar^antulas, left hidden in the meager glare of the average sun. Let me be bathed in cosmic rays: let me be seen in the ultra-violet passion of bee's eyes: let me stretch naked on a fluoroscopic^{beam} that ~~blanks~~ radiates, my bones, my glands, my tendril eager thoughts to the silent galaxy. When I arch backward, pulling on my naked cock, my legs and chest and arms swollen with iron strength, growth spills from me with semen, caking on my hand, sticking between my fingers. And ageless, my eyes peer out from my swimming skull into gasping nothingness: my brain lapses into a leth^{argy} of spent lightning and my thighs thunder shut. So grand my swollen balls, straining to pump come from turgid warmth to desolate afternoon and the light of thieves. Masturbation leads to madness, they say; and I agree: madness, the angelic blessing of otherness, the physical release from^{the} sterile hour, the grand moments when mind and body look within and become one. Foolish words: what are dreams, statues, paintings, poems, but masturbatory impulses seeking orgasm? Orgasm: the ugliest word. Come is better, softer, more languid, more like the spurt itself. And out of come the dead rise, homonculi, smeared upon a barren world seeking retri^{bution}. I recognize this through my tossing sleep and recognize the spectered proximity of madness, and that is growth. Oh, to know myself, to probe my innards and understand why the slanting night tears at my heart, and the heaving winter breaks the comfort of my swollen eyes, forcing upon me icicles and snowbright dawn. I am so lost in this darkness called life: a fever unbidden, implacable, un^hurried, phantomizing my sodden mind, tormenting

my feeble neutral soul with pinpricked joy and despair. At times I think of suicide, when my hopes are shattered on the granite outcroppings of indifference. When my love, repulsed, drifts like a naked, featherless bird on frigid winds, unable to return to the nest, unable to fall to the ground and be smashed. And then there is mad joy, the whisper of my lover, the motorcycle dash through gilded mountains, the flotilla^d caravan of harmonies, music of birds and voices and holy instruments, and I fly, inspired, to the portals of God's judging eyes and pat Him on the back and swap anecdotes and crackerbarrel archives and mock the industrious angels busy with their quills and harps. I rest on golden grasses, finger reeds, making listless music, humming of my years in the sun, my sorrows in the shade, the pleasant night hours lost in oasis-love. And they fill my empty wineskins with crystal water from their stony well, those tired angels, tired of their hymns and writing and obedience. And I laugh to them about pranks and rebellion and stir their spirits with the joyous mischief of man. And God laughs with me, wiping his moist eyes on the sleeve of his long white gown. I speak of fuming husbands, privy to the silent, hurried prayers of come-drenched wives praying that I escape: and professors picking at the crusts of spindly legs that carry them pompous through a life that has long since left them far from the avenue of meaning and knowledge and light, and how I love to cuckold them and force new dreams into the stultified brains of their tea-soaked wives: and somber politicians assassinated by my bullet, shot through the ass or balls, made to testify to the inglorious chicanery that was their religion, made to attest in their last moments, with lurching bowels, the fraud and venom that were their lives. But above all I laud the self: solitary march through humid jungles of tsetse sloth and stinging disavowal, the fang and claw of a hostile world. Self-knowledge follows solitary exultation, solitary suffering. Man alone, rebellious, posturing against a landscape of purple mountains and twisted oak. When once he weakens and cries out for definition from another, then he is lost and fades into transparency

and nothingness. They sat in a room, very comfortably, a well-appointed room, a room of modern lamps and paintings, much glass and polish. And for three years the therapy dragged on: three years for the lonely obese girl to come and have a place to talk, a place to feel important, a place to be listened to. And the nervous boy, admiring the doctor, hearing, as if by accident, tales of his prowess, his women, his charisma. Three years. How many decades more? How many decades torn from themselves dependent upon the vampires and zombies to suck them inside out and twist them into adulating automatons. The self is precious, yet cast like garbage into a meretricious shallow sea. It glints in the sun, twisted, broken, shredded beyond recognition. And the body moves on, away from the shore, casting, once or twice, wistful glances toward the waves, through moist, blood-red fields of poppies and fever. Such is the noble dignity of age: old men and women, knowing themselves at last after a lifetime of suffering, a lifetime of acquiring wisdom and serenity, their proud, wrinkled profiles etched by bulblight upon the venetian blinds, sitting silently in small rooms amidst books and tokens of their lives' journeys, their couplings and ^aprtings, their triumphs and failures. And death approaches them as if on a wide highway at high noon, smiling, his arm outstretched in greeting: not like a thief sneaking through back alleys and windows at midnight's stroke. Triumph and tragedy, success and failure, love and hate, fuse into one vital process, a necessary chain of events. The time for regrets has long passed; even quiet desperation has faded into the serenity of approaching oblivion. Not the serenity of the yogi: renunciation, capitulation, cruel heedlessness of human turmoil. Serenity hatched from the pecked egg, the shattered shell, taps and cracks and struggling to breathe and a frenzied battle to slough off chains and walk upright into the light. Depart the cave of fire and shadow. But not all. Some cling to the whims of the child. They kick and scratch against the night. They hide in closets. They whine and wheedle from their fellows assurances that this, too,

shall pass. They drag and clutch others into oblivion with them, denying them their own lives and selfhood. Ghosts without flesh, throbbing without blood. Cold, and veinless, and impotent. Batting toothless gums. They are disease and should die. Hurry them off. Put them on the midnight train, make them feel the rumble and whistle of the line to blackness. Let me be and let me live. The night: it churns me, turns my dreams fantastic. I suffocate. Ghosts pile on me whispering, touching me, cackling at my discomfiture. Life, I call you, where are you, where is my redemption? The seductiveness of death: be one with the stolid spirits, the wide-eyed shadeless ones, reed-gatherers by the black river. Silence of the tomb. Musty air. A rebel torch penetrates the dark burial room, provoking flashes of sacred color from the hieroglyphicked walls. The high priest enters and views the pale body of the princess. Her laughter echoes through the caverns of his brain. Night now, and the wound above her heart gapes like a stern mouth, her body not yet grown stiff. He drops his jeweled robes and linen of purest white, merging his flabby nakedness with torchlight and shadow. He strips the body of its burial garb and stares at the lifeless breasts and cunt. Scented oils applied to cunt and cock, slipping his finger deep within the corpse. Turning it, feeling the slack ring of muscles, the dead smoothness that he ~~can~~ imagine once gave god's son much pleasure. His eyes burn with rage and lust. His cock stands out stiff and purple, flickering in torchlight. First, he walks to her head, forces her jaw slack and, kneeling on marble, sticks his cock in the dead mouth. Maniac's laughter as he looks down at her face, ludicrous with the thick cock sticking into it, eyes shut like an impassioned lover. He stirs himself against her inner cheeks, her tongue, her pearl teeth. He squeezes dead breasts. The nipples don't rise, except in his mind. He wills them to rise. Bitch. She-dog. He positions the corpse so that it bends forwards over the sarcophagus. Kallipygos. The anus, widespread, winks grey. More oils and he shoves his finger deeply in, wrenching it, tearing at the cloacal flesh. Bitch. Bitch.

Then his cock, throbbing and wicked, ~~pup~~^{7x}ping in and out. The body responds: a twitch of reflex, an exhalation of corpse gas. He throws himself back against the chamber walls, wild-staring, as the corpse moans its indignation. It is by symbol we violate the dead: by metaphor. Daughters of memory strangled to lie. We offend the impotent ghosts and laugh at their wagging ~~righteous~~^E fingers. All we retain of this world is shadows. Current ~~bliss~~⁶ wipes out all past sorrow, yet it too falls at the instance of later grief. And we stumble on from point to point, naked, bewildered. The stumbling is all. The offense to the dead. The greater offense to the living. I felt her hands touching my eyes, my cheeks, waking me from nightmare. Such love in those eyes. Tenderness. In the alley light of our bed she comforted me, stilled the hysterical frenzy of my brain. I panted in her arms bathed in sweat. She cradled my head, fingering the strings and curls of my hair. It's well, my love. It's well. The phantoms are gone and you are near me. I wished to sink into her soft body and be carried within her forever: forever revel in her warmth. How great is love. I love her. I love and worship her. My body, wracked by that unfashionable and abused sentiment, thrills. And tears fill my eyes. She is the bulwark of my peace, the sentry over my terror. All the tempests and all the ivory wands can't wrest her from me. She is my sun and my shadow, my birth and my tomb. Bliss of mutual surrender. That great swirling universe out there that we honeycomb and squeeze our brains to find metaphors of, is nothing but a wheeling metaphor for the shine and the glory and the Helion blaze of we two. But not even love frees me from the fixations of my subconscious. Oh, to enjoy the arrogance of creating a universe and immersing others in it, a universe faceted by my own hand, polarized by ~~lenses~~⁵ of my fashioning. What consummate joy. Yet my visions and images and inspirations revolve like giddy pinwheels about a mystic central core, a fixation over which I have no control. I am powerless and the dreams revolve on and on. They are cycles, endlessly restating the same things, making me prod and tickle that psychic

nut over and over, with new words, new images, new torments and joys. Unity above variety: like the sea, the great mother, the swiftly flowing repose of the world. At my desk I sit with pen and ink hoping to capture that central demon: a drawing emerges, worked in fine line and sweat, a picture of a young girl, a nymph, foam-spewed and petal strewn. Aphrodite Kallipygos. Smiling, Botticelli's Primavera, pirouetting, showing all sides, her half-smile so foxy, so alluring. I feel more woman than man at times: that my love is feminine, aided by the frame and sinews of a man, good for fighting, for lifting things, for giving pleasure to the women around me. Often I daydream about being a Lesbian; to share my womaness in sexual release with another woman. To feel penetrated, warm waves of pleasure from within, a gentle finger twirling against the mucosus of my vagina. To be able to bare firm, soft breasts and hold them, caress their tenderness, make large their large nipples. Be there a man born without breasts? Mine are like a woman's: large, because of iron muscle, with sensitive nipples. I warm at my nipple's caress. I love having my nipples sucked, licked, gently nibbled. She is not a nymph of conventional metaphor: a mere backdrop to a tapestry, a cameo racing through a forest or bathing waist deep and naked in a clear stream, or one of many who swell the virile passage of a satyr through a sun-soaked forest clearing. She motivates, she draws me like a magnet, she midwives thoughts of sanctity and profanity, and makes me ^{cognizant} ~~cognizant~~ of myself, my body, the sheer physicality of my rapture and essence. She rests on a stool in front of a dressing curtain, undergarments hanging in languid, erotic disarray. Her neck is ribboned, her legs are covered by black stockings drawn up just above the knee. A rose rests downward from her left hand, a piece of fabric draped across her thigh in her right. Her dark hair is bound back off her neck and she is naked: her breasts are full, with large areolas and sleeping nipples. Her face mimics the other world ecstasy of the Virgin but something in the turn of her nose, the slight parting of the lips, betrays her need to be loved. And she is sad in real life: lonely,

uncertain of her sexuality, lost in a barrage of barren and thoughtless caresses, torn and bruised and swollen with the brutality of lust. Often her eyes fill with tears. She rages, she burns, she is a woman defending her soul like her child, a lioness defending a cub. Yet she is a masochist. She fears the lonely night hours and the loss of her beauty. She loves women, disgusted with men. Yet she loves women who love men and are ruled by their need for men and what men bring to them. Twentieth century Madonna: a naked woman suckling a man, her eyes turned toward his sleeping face, turned within her wondering heart. My love, there are moments when my strength fails, when the foe is not a thing to be confronted, wrestled into the dust, or ground beneath my heel. I turn to you. I demand greatness of you, a witch's incantation that soothes the blisters of my swelling and inflamed manliness. Being a man means being your worshipper, an initiate into the mysteries of your moon-drenched soul. I see you within, I see you without. You saturate my chrysolite eyes and flood the facets of my brain with light. Inspiration: my demon goading me, my Muse. We have lost the ancient blessed inspiration, a third pineal eye winking at the whisper of the gods: epics are dead, heroic tales are empty formulas, we look to the fantasy of the stars to replace the moon-glow extinguished from our hearts. Too chrome and crystal is this other world, this turmoil of rainwear and certificates and anonymous death. When we were few and subtle, and life was too precious to be thrown away, and hypocrisy was punished by death, and dishonesty was sacrilege: when a common man died and the tribe was depleted and shivered with the loss: and warlocks trembled at the fall of a star, trembled for all, and chanted poetry, great poetry wrenched from the spontaneous bowels, the pumping heart, not impassioned but the embodiment of passion, not rhythmic but the clap and thrust of rhythm itself. Such are dreams today of creatures suspended between two worlds: one world of sensation and novacaine, a narcotic haze of dust and anonymity and apathy: one world of ecstasy and nightmare, torment and challenge, an ancient racial intuition

filled with thick-browed apparitions of the past. We are chosen ones, born
 with the lust of the universe within us. We write or paint or make fortunes
 out of paper or ^ecarve the blue sky with monoliths of man's indifference. Yet
 we are throwbacks to the age of cooling on this planet: the primal soup floods
 our thick and splashing veins. Our words are visions, defying analysis. Our
 time is the spinning reel of the planets crossed by star-paintings in the
 night. Our night is the night of Orion, his shoulders gleaming, his belt,
 studded with faint Andromeda, linear and stark, as if drawn by human hands
 seeking to compose form out of darkness. I am one with the creature who gazes
 at me from the other side of the universe. He sees different blessings cast
 in silver and starfoil: different creatures populate his poet's night. We
 gaze at each other unknowing, through limitless clouds of dust and dark,
 through eons of time, and I scribble my soul and bear the burden of dreams
 and he: what? But ^w~~we~~ are one, joined by the blue spark of our supercharged,
 spurting souls. And we ponder our missions: a messianic concept, perhaps too
 poor for the thunder darts we hurl. Messiah. Savior. Nothing to save. Sal-
 vation rests not in our hands but rests in the night of tranquil, moon-drenched
 mind. I stand before a bowl of beaten silver, engraved with beasts: ram,
 goat, goose, sparrow. An incense cone spirals thick smoke up to the heavens.
 Purple tendrils: frankincense and myrrh. Fingers of the moon in this pit of
 night, these dark hours when Orion strides from the sky and the Scorpion slithers
 along the height of heaven's vault, reach down and cur^e~~l~~ the smoke around tips
 of long tapering fingers: Selene, inconstant goddess, searching the shadowed
 earth for youths to love. Your gifts are manifold: dizzy visions, a body that
 burns and rages, the madness of poetry. Your beauty unsurpassed: silver skinned,
 laughing limbed, with breasts full and sensuous, two glowing beacons in the
 night. You rule the dark hours when the prudish sun has been extinguished in
 Western seas. The hours when dreams, lustfilled and exciting, toss my body
 in sleep. You come to me with whispers and caresses. You smile down on me,

my passive willing body. You touch my breasts with your tongue and run it flicking down my muscled torso to my cock, a flower petaled with soft brown curls. Selene, you masculate me with your tangle, you make me a roaring bull. I pull you laughing onto my thick cock and lift you high into the air and slam your hot, willing body up and down my cock, my thighs iron with your weight. Rouse me, goddess, from this torpor. You come, the great globe of the moon comes in my arms, screaming delight to the inky night. I come, tense, iron, growling and snort ~~like a bull~~ ^{ing fire}. Then you leave me depleted but majestic and wander the night searching for other souls to embrace. I would satisfy you alone. I would keep you with me for endless nights of pleasure. I resent your other loves, the thousand thousand souls panting in your arms in lust-drenched rapture. But now I must win you: the first time I am heedlessly selected, a random choice in this universe of myriad choices, random comets and swirling planets. Now, to summon you back, I stand before the incense tower, the serpentine smoke, and seek you with my mind, my pineal eye. Inconstant goddess, I gird my loins with poetry, record my visions, suffer the torments of the damned enduring your neglect: I will make you return: I will avenge the wound to my pride. I gave you pleasure, intense pleasure. As great as mine. Yet you turn from me and would be enticed back. You are a goddess and the entire universe gives you equal pleasure, from the tiniest copulating bird to the most noble youth or the crash of asteroids. Your largesse descends freely upon all like chill snow and cosmic rays. The first time. Then you withhold yourself, you laughingly abandon. Why me? Better I had not tasted the fruits of your love than to face this chill void without your soft arms ripping into my back. So much left to do with you: I want to ~~fuck your ass,~~ ^{sodomize you,} Selene. I speak these words without shame: you know no shame, you welcome all with silver dappled laugh and languid eye. You would welcome me Selene: your ass would spread and gape and wriggle on my cock and I would squeeze your breasts and you would finger your cunt and howl delightfully. That

August night on the mountainside, our reg^al guns smooth and salty with sweat.
 I woke to find the ~~s~~entries and determine their alertness on that night of
 terror. I found one: she was bent beneath him, her naked white thigh turned
 to the moonlight. They pumped and groaned in the Aught night, sweat~~then~~
 semen spilling on the soft forest moss. ~~Angered~~^{Angry}, yet I respected their heat.
 I respected this whispered validation of the human soul, rising above turmoil
 and danger, to seek its authenticity in bodily excess, a pounding drive for
 life. Then fireflash and a bullet's whine and the two fell dead on the soft
 moss and they were upon us. Freedom, like pure air and wind, is an axiom
 of this planet, as indisputable and indefinable as a geometric point. Yet it
 costs so much. The tired billions plod through life, heads bowed, contemptuous
 of their minds and bodies, heedless of their souls, willingly led to destruction
 and slaughter. The ovens gaped: ovens that consumed the lust for life, ovens
 that seared the testicles and ovaries that would produce new lives, new ways,
 better futures, ovens that shut their iron doors upon the evolutionary progress
 of humanity. They live quiet lives of pain, they live without purpose, they
 copulate in dark alleys, furtively, without kiss or whisper, they separate and
 flee, ashamed. We rose against that world: I, the poet, armed with pen and
 ink; I, the soldier, a rifle at my side, a knife strapped to my leg; I, the
 political man, garnering lies and shattering them; I, the physician, healing
 the wounds of those who would permit my passage among them. What dreams then:
 what visions of future glory: the New Jerusalem. Corruption stank all around
 us and our fragile youth shrivelled like heated orchid petals, recoiling from
 the stench. They erred, those pompous corrupters: their illusion of sanctity
 was too well conceived. Their conspiracy to emulate and defraud virtue suc-
 ceeded too well. Comic books with super heroes preached justice and liberty,
 swelling my young mind with noble ideals. Historical lies spewed in classrooms,
 designed to make me mindlessly proud of my nation, created in me an expectation
 of greatness. And then when I awoke from my childhood-- what traumatic vistas

my nation, my world, disclosed. I was like a farm boy with a playful pet fox who suddenly spies it one day after a kill, ^{to} friendly licking maw soaked with fresh blood, sparrow feathers and bits of gristle scattered in its fur. Be wise, you charlatans and perverters: teach political expediency instead of idealistic heroism; teach the art of deception instead of merely deceiving; teach economic necessity instead of ethics; ban Parson Weems and Superman and Tarzan from the purview of the young. And you will not be faced by a rebel generation, an angry intellectual mob of frustrated and disillusioned young men and women ^{because they} will have expected nothing from their nation or themselves. The shadow of the night frightens me. It's lonely out there, crouching ^{on} a roof or pressed flat against an open skylight watching out for cops. I breathe soot and dust off the bricks pressed against my face, but I can't let myself sneeze or we're all done for. So I lay flat and watch and listen, waiting for that sudden inquisitive face to appear over the roof's edge, those wide hunting eyes that I ~~then~~ ^{aim} have to ~~put a bullet~~ between. And I fear the moon and the stars, ~~which I really love~~ ^{my lovers}, and ~~find myself~~ scowling at their silver shine. I sink into shadows, my pistol ready, my clothes black and sleek and rugged. My shoes are soft, quiet, black, with thick treads to make me sure-footed on these nocturnal missions. ~~Hah. Nocturnal missions.~~ ~~Know what that sounds like? Like my sex life now.~~ No time for women, just a succession of stolen cunts, furtive fuckings, quick, intense, then back to work. None of us has the fortitude to really know a ^owoman: we fear love like we fear the full moon. It makes us soft, vulnerable. I don't want to hurt a woman by loving her and having her love me and then having her pick up my pieces when the soldiers have blown me to bits on some goddamned lonely roof. And if I found her raped and dismembered, like they've done so often to so many of us, I'd go mad. I'd lose my cool and just run around killing anything that moved. My outrage in a mad universe. I still don't see how he does it: he has learned to love us all, yet can accept death and atrocity without blowing

up. A man with an infinite capacity for despair. I don't believe it. He'll take too much one day and blow sky high like the rest of us. Despised by most of society, hurt by the jealous powermongers among us, sending us out into the night to fight for ideals that most everybody laughs at, not knowing if we'll get back alive or even if it is really all worth it. That's what haunts him the most, he told me: that one night he'll wake up and realize he's been a fool and that hundreds of us have died for nothing, for his vanity, the vanity of his human wishes. I feel immense compassion for him. So do a lot of people. Our numbers are growing every day, thousand upon thousand. / I sit here in this hellish night getting arms, or money, or hostages, or chemicals for bombs or god-knows-what. For him. He's the embodiment of the dreams. ~~we all have~~. Out there, just empty desperation, living for a pension that may or may not be waiting ~~for me~~, bowing to corrupt politicians, corrupt union leaders, gangsters. Here, well, I feel alive, I feel like I'm doing something to keep my species alive, to keep us from just looking at our watches one day, nodding, and rolling over dead. There's got to be something that makes us intrinsically different from, and better than, beasts. He's taking us to it. He can't define it, himself, but he's leading us there. Moses on Pisgah. He'll probably just get a glimpse of it and then be shot and the rest of us will get there and know he was right, we were all right. The guerrilla Jesus, ushering in the New Jerusalem with a book of poems in his pocket and a Walther strapped to his hip. Like disciples, he said we were. More important than him. We bequeath him to posterity. We can twist his memory, like ~~and~~ Paul and the Gospellers did with their petty politicking, or we can see that the truth is told as best we can perceive it. Then he left us, shutting the door to the back room, I think he got laid. That's my kind of leader: sometimes he makes me laugh so fucking hard I could die. God, we're so alone. We're such twitching bundles of nerves, wracked at the slightest setback, vulnerable to the slightest breeze of fate. If she looks at me with her eye just slightly turned,

or her brow arched a bit oddly, my stomach churns and I suffer for days and days not daring to speak to her, not daring to come out directly and ask her. We haven't the constitution for the vistas of our minds. I would pluck the stars from heaven to hold their beauty in my hand but I tremble at a dog that glares at me from a bush where it lifts its leg. I would dare so much but my body heaves against me. Life is poorly plotted. A master plan so obscure, so abstract, that it breaks ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~harp~~ of my back just thinking about it. Unless you simplify by denying all high thoughts. High thoughts. Gutter thoughts, thoughts of a toad to us a thousand years from now. No. We still find wisdom in the ancients. Plato. Homer. Art and Wisdom, the Nine Ladies, Whores of Madmen. I would bed them all, my wild hair ^sstreaming, my beard thick with immortal cunt juice. I'll bet Erato's graat in bed, whispering poetry while she tickles your balls making you come. Or Calliope, soothing you to sleep after. Only madmen can know them and there are few madmen. Some of us they just use for themselves, sucking us dry of seed, then squeezing our minds into paste. Those bay at the moon from locked rooms. The others are chosen to immortalize their slavery in ink or paint or stone. Madmen diddling their psychic shit, building shit-castles and paddling like lunatics in the mind's ^ssewer. Some try to organize their madness, put labels and numbers to it, but then they lose it and join the zombies. Order out of madness? Absurd. Sophrosyne, more like it. What is the plot of a crystal glin^tling in the sun? A hidden structure, distant from man's mind. Yet the beauty is sublime. So I dream of Erato and Selene bedding me in moss. Erato sucks my cock and I eat Selene's dewy cunt. But that happy dream is short and that face appears again, precipitating out of mist. A cave man, an ancestor, I see it now, I'm sure of it. But those eyes of infinite wisdom, looking far beyond the jungle of its world up to the stars, out through time. Wait. I have it. The first Messiah. The first prophet of God raising his people from the slime of beasts into the abode of men. What virgin eyes to look upon a fetal world and guide

it with his miracles toward the distant lights he was first to see. Raised
 among a tribe of them, eating fruit while nestled in the branches of a tree,
 he woke one night in the fullness of the moon, when the moon was swollen on
 the horizon and bigger than a beast's mad face, and saw the vision of his Father
 and knew he was the son of God. He walks, bent and hesitant, toward the bloodied
 figure curled against the bole of the tree, the woman dying from the rending
 saber-teeth of the wild midnight cat. He touches her with his black and hairy
 paw, his eyes gone vacant and gleaming, and her wounds dry up, replaced with
 healthy flesh. How different the needs of his flock from ~~that~~^{that} of Jesus. Sav-
 age, yet first born to teach compassion and life's higher purpose. Gaze upon
 plants and see that they are entities alive but to reproduce themselves: but
 why? Why reproduction for its own sake? Something beyond itself must be
 created to make something worthy of reproduction. Ah, how naive I am. The
 world is a tangle of weeds, a jumble of wild moss. All life burns with the
 fire of itself, growing, feeding, destroying, for no end but that it must flame
 itself out to the last twist of wick. And then darkness. And eternal night.
 And the realm of the immortal gods that forms a backdrop for life's fever. I
 rest in a cave by the sea, my eyes closed, listening to the pounding surf. I
 hear the surf pulsing within me. The surf, my self, life: are one. And I
 walk^K along the sands, brushing pebbles with my bare feet, thinking of Mycenaen
 fleets adrift from wars. Within my memory, they embark upon their triremes,
 armor burnished and gleaming in the sun, the people tearfully waving them to
 war and glory. And I retreated from the busy life of Athens, abandoned my
 chiton in the forest, and pursued my way naked and alone^l in the dark woods.
 Something drove me away from myself: away from my frenzied night slumber and
 the dreams of processional sacrifices and the weighty looks of priests. I
 told myself god called to me, father Zeus, lord of those solitary souls lost
 in the darkness of great Gaea's womb. Master of lightning and the rumbling
 thunder: illuminate my way. I sought solace in the sea, the heavy lulling voice

of the great sea. And amidst green and bulbous weeds, and cave slime, I stretched my naked body and thought upon the universe, that multitude of eyes of fire staring down upon me at night. And when the moon was full and summoned storms, I worshipped her. And when she was a slivered sickle, I bore her in my belt like a dagger. But this night, as I walked by the sea and waves, I came upon the body of a beautiful girl washed ashore, recently drowned. She was soft, yet bore the chill of the sea upon the surface of her still flesh. And so beautiful. Stars fell that night, merely to glance at her frozen face more closely. I took her to my cave and soothed my loneliness with her body, speaking to her in dying whispers, pumping seed into her dead flesh. Zeus had sent me a sign: it was for me to interpret. I did as my soul commanded: I am not ashamed. And now she has been frozen, no longer ~~receptive~~ ^{pliant} to my embraces, now she is a lost love, like a rock or wrecked ship washed upon the shore. And I stand upon the cliffs, my face above dark waters, looking into infinity. I loved her and lost her: she rots, and is mine no more. And I grow dizzy looking into the dark water far below me, waiting. Let me drink to you then and applaud ^{your} ~~you~~ youth: a precious gift. Use it well. Let waters splash over it, cool and soothing, making it sparkle. The age when your body cries out to be used: in love, in sport, in intuition. Inner ancient voices speak through your body, calling to that first Messiah, seeking life. Father of prophets, Sire of morality, dark days glowered on your birth. No comets fell, no cataclysm shook the firmament: you slept, nursing at an ape's breast. What phantasm, this morality. De Sade in his chateau, chains and wheels creaking with human misery: a fascination born from seeds within us of you, great father, seeds from that age of violence and necessity. Blood, and nipples shaved off the globes of breasts, fascinate the modern mind. De Sade languished in Charenton, prey to visions. Wake, brother, whisper to me of your Muse. How does she appear to you: visions? ethereal in the sigh^s of your willing victims? vaporous, like the exhumation of a tomb? They suffered, those phantoms of your mind: reduced

to numbered atrocities, victims without names, their agonized screams echoing over centuries. Echoes: chords of music, harmonic or dissonant, set in motion by a man's solitary thought, left to ripple forever, ~~and ever~~. That sad girl in the park, pretending to read, envying the vortex of leaves raised by the wind, envying their common swirl, their mass rush toward dissipation: she longs for a common moment, a vortex shared, she dies inside from loneliness.

De Sade: your Muse-- does she reach her? You're involuted, old spirit, trapped, a mad minotaur in the labyrinth of your own mind. Charenton was a projection of yourself, the product of your mind, a ripple. My dream is a ripple of your madness. And she sits quietly in the park, waiting for storm of fury, a mad lecher even, to take her out of herself. I drop a page of my poems into the wind, a leaf, white and billowy, hoping she'll reach out and accept it. The gods are with me. It flies right to her feet, Timorous, pretending she hasn't seen me release it, she reads: her face shocked, excited. She's read nothing like that before. Shocked, yet she can't take her eyes off it. Thoughts that lingered only in the darkest, most dismal dungeon of her mind, surfacing only in dreams half-remembered and understood not at all. A kindred soul, ~~after all~~.

Beneath our ethics and social responsibility lurks the same curiosity, the same fascination with the unknown and macabre. Not a beast within-- how trite, how simplistic. The curiosity of a child: the fascination that has raised our heads to the gods. Pygmalion, curious to midwife the form from the stone, finds he has chipped away the inhibitors of his mind and laid bare his daemon: Galatea, most blessed, soon pulsing with the blush and warmth of life: vitalization of his aging dreams, his deepest erotic fantasies. Echoes: she sits in the park, tremulous with the ripples of the past, shielding her own ripples within her heavy winter coat. I smile at her, thinking. She stands to leave. Hesitating, she walks to me, my poem flutters in her hand. That face in my dream: a source of echoes. I receive his ancient thoughts. That poet across the galaxy: more ripples. I assert nothing, I define nothing but myself. I am protean, an

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aging amoeba with a long white beard, my eyes weak from study, heavy with pouches and wrinkles. I embrace all. They lie before me in rows: there is ^{the} ~~a~~ stench of urine all around me: the nurses pass quickly among the howling bodies, mad with pain, crying for death. The surgeons pass regretfully through the rows, hiding their saws and bone-chisels in black leather bags. They wear butchers' aprons. They stink of carbolic acid. My nation is a rotting corpse and these, my brothers, are the scraps of flesh and nerves bitten off by maggots. Battle sounds, the bark of cannon, resonates from far away. More are coming: there are always more. He looks up at me from beneath his sheets, eyes fearful, numb with pain. My beautiful brother, my dear son, wracked with pain: how beautiful you are in this midnight hour, your eyes bright and sensitive in lampglow. Another time, another place, I would have walked Manahatta's streets with your hand in mine, I would have raised a mug with you and we would laugh about our dance among the trolley cars and how we scattered candy to the laughing children who lined the streets, and then I would have taken you to Brooklyn on the rolling ferry, the wind splaying our hair, my arm around your waist, home to my small flat and to my bed. And we would have spent the glistening New York night in throes of love. Another time, another place: not here and now. God how I despise the here and now. I learn my fate: mortician and ghoul: writer of my nation's obituary and dissector of her corpse. And your corpse, my love, I will soon set gently into the ground. Winter snows will fall, gold buttons from some soldier tragically lost in battle, will be buried under new moss, spring will blot the memory of death with a kaleidoscope of color and new life. Can such sorrow be obliterated through time and the wheeling seasons' cycles? Never, my love: we are but numbed, narcotized, by the pain. Like those men whose legs are tossed out with the trash. They learn to forget but the dreams persist, the nerve roots deep in their brains twitch and they think their long dead foot itches. We fool ourselves, protest ourselves from the horrid past, throw ourselves into a bland opiate present. But the memory is

etched within us and we pass that memory on to generations hence, to torment their dreams. And here I sit, by your side, in the flickering gaslight, looking at your dying, angelic face. Tomorrow the sun will rise and make the horizon florid with shame and sleeping men will stir and stretch and corpses will not and you will probably be stiff and still and I will sit by the bed of another, resting my lumpy hand on his wet forehead and forget you among the strangled cries of thousands. Peace, my love. The quiet of oblivion awaits you, as it one day will reach out to me. The readiness is all. She loves that child. He raped her and now she goads his son with flowers and pretty pebbles, tempting him to walk, to run, to fall into her lap. It's beautiful, really, that in spite of war and atrocity, especially the atrocity of her rape, that such love persists. Such is woman: all-suffering, enduring all, bringing warm life forth from wicked seed. Shit, I'm an incurable romantic. Got to stop this gazing out at the stars and sunsets, and saying prayers to glowing Venus. Aphrodite: sea-spawned, blood of her father's severed phallus. This is war. We hide by day, sally by night, without benefit of cloud or fire, alone, off to die or to wounds that make us wish we were dead. What they did to her: the shocking hands they laid on her, strapped to that table, that infernal machine with the electrodes and the pincers and the needles. Technological man: technillogical man. When they came, they could make her child's body twitch and writhe exaggeratedly with their damned electricity. And the electric dildo: the experiments. God, what madness. How could she survive: baptism through the stuff of nightmares. They could wrench her body, but not her soul. Whatever that is. Must be something: it survived where flesh failed. Glad they never got me: they want to though. They will, someday. I will be stupid, or betrayed, or just too tired to hide anymore. Unless we win: win what? The whole world is an armed camp, everything is in chaos. Irreconcilable hatreds tear child from parent, brother from brother, sister from sister. The virtues that started this war vanished with the first death of a friend, the first bitter cause for

revenge. Now there is just hatred and love seems to be anathema. That night those two lovers were shot while fucking: stealing a moment's passion. And that cursed bullet found them in all that dark. Maraculous. This tired universe speaks through that bullet. And I will keep on, from sheer momentum probably, until a bullet finds me as well. I wish there were a heaven I could look to. I want a home after my death far from all this misery. Someplace hidden maybe within the Horsehead or among the arms of the Crab. Maybe that's heaven: anyplace not here. I have committed the sin of pride, like Lucifer, by asserting an ~~ethos~~^{ethos} both romantic and idealistic upon a numb universe. And, like Lucifer, I've been condemned to reside in Hell, bear my Pandemonium within me wherever I go. It makes sense. I'm trapped within the walls of my virtue like a madman within walls of stone. Why am I granted visions, beatific visions like that mother and child? Why am I ~~spurred~~^{urged} in my delusions and encouraged to go on? It's all sick. There is nothing well. Not even the stars. And the poet rapped on the cottage door, pulling his cloak about himself as protection against the wind and rain. A dwarf opened the door and welcomed him with a slight smile, his eyes bulging from taut parchment sockets. The cottage smelled of sweet opium vapor and pungent dung. Candles flickered in silver sconces hung upon the walls. Books filled shelf upon shelf, old papyri and manuscripts. Bent over a crucible, the warlock would not be disturbed. A dark stranger lurked in a corner's shadow, hushed against the wall. --Why do you hide from the light? You press against the wall, emulating a vapour, hiding from my sight. --From intruding eyes. (A voice reverberant, sinister, rising from a cavern.) --And you? you have kept away from me for a week. We mean so much to each other and ~~you~~ dare shut me out of your life. --My work. It calls me away from you. Please. Go away. --You stink like the sotted fish-mongers with your fumes and bubbling dung and pustules of rotting garbage. Your science. You've created the jaws of Hell. --Be silent and let me work! --Work that demands silence and darkness and shuns companionship and ~~fresh~~^{the}

breeze of day is no work: it's depravity. You fear something. Tell me what you fear. --Nothing. --He fears nothing. Perhaps you simply annoy him with your senseless probing. --What business is it of yours? --Silence. Go now before you say too much. You know nothing of what you are doing. --Silence? I am a poet: my very being is sound. Gossamer trill of my mind or the liquidity of my singing words. I will be silent when my mind seeks the shadow like your friend here and asks no questions, demands nothing of life. Until then I will raise my voice and protest with all my strength your self-enslavement to this demon. --You will be hurt. --You, there! There are no poets in Hell, are there? --We are all poets, but our iambs are greens and our caesuras are the flicks of the lash. You will learn all that soon enough. --I? I will learn nothing of the sort. You could sooner blacken the face of the sun than snatch my soul into your dark realm. Demon, stand forth and bow before your better. --You're mad! Soften your haughty words. --Let him rant. He is a poet: it's ^{his} their nature. He will see in the end where his shrill bravado gets him. He will learn that the master of the universe is not the baby lamb but the ravening wolf. --You dare blaspheme against the Good? --I dare? I invented blasphemy. I revealed it to be the truth. I freed it from oppression by myth and lying legend perpetrated by the false spirit of righteousness. You are a fool and soon will be a martyr. (He steps from the shadows, sneering, revealing the hideousness of his face.) --Such horror! Such ugliness! See, see before you your chosen master. How could you have fallen so far, so quickly. --He gives me great powers. --He bargains for your soul. He would have you become like himself. --I need to probe wonders and marvels. Your god gives me ashes to eat. --The marvels are of a different sort, not germinated in a flask. What unholy path has he sent you on? --I choose my own path. --Not anymore. --Upstart! You know nothing. Leave me in peace. And the figure in the shadows grinned, and holy bells rang throughout the heavens and comets fell upon the earth wreaking great destruction and the massive masonry walls of ageless cities

crumbled at the chiming tones. And my head filled with visions, transparent
 wraiths beckoning me to join the warlock in capitulation. And my head swam
 with the luxurious delight of proffered peace, and omnipotence, and the satis-
 faction ~~instantaneously~~ of my myriad and sundry lusts. Such a small price, a soul
 in a velvet coffer, shined prettily and left limpid and ~~was~~^{was} and ~~f~~^faccid. The
 ease of resignation. I was hypnotized by the dark man's laughter and the
 caressing voice of Selene, so often wafted to me on sultry night winds; grew
 faint and disappeared in the distance. Selene: triple goddess: my faithful
 protectress, why did you abandon me in my deepest hour of need? why cast me
 lonely on receding shores, to watch my genius dissolve among the churning pebbles
 of the beach? Join the dogs, my friend. Join the fawning minions with their
 slack jowls and dripping tongues. Forget the illusion of your poet's art and
 the invisible gods you worship in silent fields. Paganism: you are captive
 to a myth. I offer you contentment: real power in a real world. Yes, I am
 as illusory as they: I am amorphous because I am immortal. But I offer you
 real dreams, dreams leading to fulfillment, not masks for madness. You are
 mad, you know: I can cure you. Believe in me. Look into the crucible, amidst
 the spitting philtre, see the coalescing^s form. I've taught him to create life:
 homonculus. Think what I can offer you. He is happy. He feels like a god.
 So eagerly do we embrace our illusions. But you know better: and I can serve
 you better. And then? Why worry: your shadow will dance with the ~~best~~^{best}, tickled
 by flames. It is inevitable, whether you submit to me now or not. I threw
 myself panting to the door and fell out into the brisk night winds. Bats flitted
 across the face of the moon, lured by the scent of prey to disturb the solitude
 of night. And his laughter filled the night and the great silver ~~circle~~^{halo} around
 the moon, foretelling ~~more~~ rain, became his gaping mouth, emanating mocking
 tones and grunts of obscene delight. There is nothing but my domain. There
 There is no alternative. You are still a prisoner of happy myths born of pain
 and sorrow and the desire for bliss. There is just me, whether I lurk in the

shadows or grimace amidst flames. Just me. And I slammed my fists to my ears and clenched my teeth and heaved denial from my chest to the night winds. An abyss opened before me, swirling me in, sucking toward me, and I saw within the vortex a thousand faces like mine, clenched and defiant, yet stewing in flames and thick excrement for all eternity. And a face I saw which I thought to be the holiest of holies, languid and gentle, was caught in the center: the whole forming a vast hyacinth with curled petals of flame and anguished faces. Look around you. See the blessed faces. See the youthful, half-clothed limbs. So muscular. So smooth. Some will grow to greater strength: their muscles will harden and bulge further and their hearts will be keener for war. Others will age into men with wisdom in their eyes and fine black beards: ~~very distinguished looking~~. And some won't age but will decay: you'll find them years from now sprawled out on some teeming dockyard, drunk before the sun reaches its height. They will be the beggars and the leprous and the pleading, filthy, scorched forms we will hasten away from as we go about our daily affairs. And some there are who will not age but, snared by hopeless love or mystified by some scheming man's betrayal, will end their hopeless days with a piteous cry washed by Aelous over the Aegean rocks. And some will return from the games bearing a laurel wreath and a dedicatory tripod for their ^{native} ~~hometown~~ temple, and they will have everlasting fame at least until the next barbarian army overwhelms their shores. And some will live in peace and die in peace and be unknown to posterity but for an awkward scribbled tombstone or a chance dedication painted on some vase. And they will have been consumed by the same passions as you and I, and have dreamed the same dreams. Without tribe, without memory, without poet's tongue to sing their mundane crusades, their valiant forays against domesticated monsters. And some there are who will scheme their way to wealth and glean many talents for their iron chests and build monuments to the gods to perpetuate their names and even ^{out} ~~monuments~~ to their hetairae or ephebuloi. And some of these will be drowned at sea, struggling to tear their money-belts off and stay above the waves. A pity. And some will go mad with thoughts of

sin and cut their loins with gleaming daggers and worship barbarian deities
 that preach passivity and ~~penitance~~^{penance} and otherworldly virtues that have no place
 beneath this wonderous sky of blue. And still others will embrace a different
 madness: a poet, here and there, thinking he ~~can~~^{can} make up for the limitations of
 his world by flights of fancy and ~~the~~^{the} intensification of passions that barely flut-
 ter his heart. And they, my friend, will bay at the moon and call upon goddesses
 for the divine breath, and will carouse at wine parties and spout their drunken
 verbiage into reeling drunken ears. That's what I see when I look into the
 future, my friend: a multitude of roads, a myriad of disasters. And who can
 pick and choose what is happiness? We learn little from the paths of others.
 That little must be tended like a sacred flame: but too soon it is blown out
 by a stray and errant breeze. A tiny breeze. So let us join the crowd at the
 Pynx, and raise our giddy brows in marvel at the least scandal, and pass gentle
 fingers along soft chitons and over lustrous thighs. And the gods will remember
 this night as one holy and full of worship. Our dreams play us for fools: we
 are forced to impose upon our waking lives a deceptive order, a rationality,
 to compensate for the bewildering chaos of our nights. The night of mind, the
 hours when demons reign: and sense passes through dense tourmaline fogs to be
 prised into a billion scintillating shards. How much lovelier and more ter-
 rifying this surreal landscape, wheeling, brightly colored, without plot or
 theme, impelled simply by nucleic necessity, swelled on liquid tides of precious
 stones toward the spark of light in a wizard's eye. This is the stuff of poetry
 and music and art, not the scrofulous formality that critics and teachers love
 to applaud because it is the only thing they can teach. Not even noble Socrates
 could teach of the beauty in an outcropping of quartz caught in the last beams
 of a dying sun or the magnificence of a night with twelve moons.. Such disparity
 in this universe of ours: Ahriman and Ahmazda: such despair and such beauty.
 She's drunk of it all, that woman. In the quiet of her shabby living room she
 puts a half-eaten plateful of vegetables down on a table and nestles into the

corner of her couch. Her eyes vacant with deep thoughts, she chews her finger. The lamplight etches her features in stark chiaroscuro, the folds of her grey sweatshirt, hiding her flaccid bosom and paunch, attain the dignity of a Renaissance work of art, a pieta. She muses on her lost beauty and the women, wild and soft, who were her lovers. She grows older and the dark night closes in upon her, turning her eyes to her breast, and she thinks of the slim fingers that had caressed her large nipples and the soft tongues that had sucked them into prominence. She had been like the sun, spewing fire, and full of a woman's sagacity among the multitudes crying to her for solace. She filled awkward silences born of despair with tales and parlor-wit that purchased smiles from Hell. She fed hungry minds with courage and hungry thighs with her statuesque sensuality, her hot tongue. She reaches under the couch for her box of poems, hundreds of clipped phrases and epiphanies that she created to gain perspective about her life, to fling herself back from the bottle and the pill and the mortal terrors of childhood. How brief they were of late, as if she were gaining the wisdom to encompass galaxies in walnut shells. Lovers had been taken from her or flown. She had made no provision for these impossible lonely nights. And heightened sensibilities chained her to this couch, her pen, and the lamplight. Lies, that's all. She rummaged through her box of poems: wistful and samaritan I face the window/ I listen for the falling down of clouds on this soft street/ and the children scream their delight/ and the undershirts are frayed that drape fat and hairy men/ leaning out of windows to dream upon the street. All lies, this thing called poetry. I'm alone and scared and I fight against death. You can't fight against death. I will pass on and the world will close in on the empty space I leave and it will be filled and I'll be forgotten. Who's necessary, really? I had my circle, I played my part, the circle disintegrated through death and lost love until it vanished. Now I draw my circle around my feet. Lies: these poems are conjuror's babble, mere pretence. Some are born to peck out bits and lumps of a thousand anonymous

passing people: like young cuckoos they swell and displace the world with their bulk. Others, like me, are made to be pecked until dry and empty. I lack the discipline to continue. I can coast, but who's here to laugh at my quips and witty ironies, who's here to reflect my worth in appreciating faces? I never learned how to die, that's my tragedy. I always feared death so, ~~that~~ I thought it had to be cataclysmic, catastrophic, overwhelming. Not ~~this~~ fading. I ^would like to banter with death, raise a glass of Poily-Fuisse with him, and discuss the future over a plate of fine cheeses. And death, of course, would be a gay man with receding hair and sensitive eyes, full of anecdotes, ~~with~~ ~~Bobby Short singing in the background.~~ He'd know my parents and he'd admire them and make me ^{eager} ~~long~~ to meet them again. I'll make of death what I want, a last lying gesture. And she drew out a blank white sheet from her box, and her cerulean flair pen, and her hand circled like a hawk over the blank page, poised, an avatar in lamplight. The wine of forgetfulness spills over ~~these~~ Hudson River nights. The viaduct is silent in lamplight, and the once-dark pallisades sparkle with lights. A dog barks far away, chasing an intruder, perhaps an old drunk stumbling through his woozy night. And the incessant sigh of traffic along the West Side Highway. I piss off the viaduct onto the meat-packers' trucks and empty myself before the first drops hit. I see, for the first time, my piss as a single gold strand: it glints in the glare of ionized mercury vapor. This warm summer night brings out the nocturnals of Riverside Park. ^{Figures} Figures dart from behind tree trunks and off into bushes. Ominous, silent men stare at me from benches. My muscles and intent eyes discourage muggers. And the black fag with short-shorts glides past me, his shorts pulled down in back to flash me his taut black ass, silver in lamplight. The universe swims with lamplight: stars and electric bulbs and the generated spark in the human eye. Most telling this last: light that deceives and beckons. And the neural synapses of the thinking mind: blue sparks for philosophy, red for lust, green for ambition, mauve for thoughts of death. A rat jumps from the grass

into a hole in the stone wall. Their tunnels stretch all the way from the Hudson to Broadway. The lights in their beady eyes, phosphors dragged inland from the moonlit sea. Light and water: the universal common denominators. They are transformed by whatever they touch. Water by shape and temperature, light by color. Thus I achieve authenticity: through the contemplation of universals, through the delineation of the weave of the pattern of the fabric of the bolt of the universe. And I find a succession of prepositions, an infinite progression, a rat's tail of terms ^u undulating through all time. And I know that light and water symbolize the infinity of that progression: but the matrix of reality itself resides within my mind. Not the mind, or a mind, the human mind, for mine is a reality shared by no one, but for brief instants of congress with a lover, a moment of connection and recognition. Grammatical possessive describes my mind: I resist the myriad motes of prattle and jargon flung at me by the world's voices, all the structured and harried struggling to be heard. I pick and choose what I hear, I pounce upon the voices that are real and meaningful to me. And the black fag passes me in the park with his ass hanging out, enticing, I have become a sudden reality to him and he an object of poetry to me. And the light shining off his ass assumes a transformation unique to itself and reminds me of the universal gleam of all things. The Hudson captures the moon and scatters it into an obelisk of sparks. And cloudy nights reflect the city lights in red blood. Weep for me, Satan, who has seen the glimmer of the totality which you dared to gaze upon whole. My hell is to ever see the mockery of form and rational progression and the pitiful hopelessness of humanity to make of events and lives a novel's reality, with beginning, middle and end. Thus did the prophets look to the last days, the teleological ^c exclamation point that would give authenticity to their angry scowls and bitter words. He rises out of the crowd, a madman standing upon the steps of the agora, poised to speak to a captive people. His robes flutter in the sudden wind, scattering the dust of poverty and isolation. Behold, you men

of sin, that the day of God's judgment is upon you. The crowd goes upon its business mildly amused, the poulterer raises a squawking chicken by its ugly seamed feet and barter with a maidservant, the wine vendor urges his laden asses onward beneath the very nose of the scowling prophet. You see the works of God before you, gleaming in every eye, the light of thought, the light of the inspiration of God's holy word. A cobbler passes, pushing through the crowd, hurrying to deliver expensive boots to the adjutant-general. Yet ~~you~~ none of you believe in the divinity that God has placed within you merely by making you his creatures, his servants. Truant children, hiding from their fishwife mothers and preparing to do battle with stones, stop and stare at the crazy old man. So you pollute yourselves and daily break God's laws and worship the idols of the heathen because you are blind to the divinity within you. A troupe of harlots pass, led by their gaudy pimp, a man of glinting eye and many rings of gold, and they make tongues at the workmen, and bare their breasts and call out seductions to the men who stop and stare, smiling. And God has seen his divinity sullied at your hands, and He weeps for you, He weeps for your sinfulness. And he has sent oppressors to make you captive and throw down your temple, but you are undaunted, for you have already thrown down God and His temple in your hearts. Coal black slaves, Ethiopians from the playground of the gods, bear trunks of clothes and provisions upon their backs, servants of a caravan. And you mock the word of God with your disdain. You defy the Lord to enter into a covenant with you and allow yourselves to be brought back into the serenity of His worship. A rotten desert-apple flies from the crowd and strikes the prophet on the head. Laughter follows and the masses of people go on about their business. Harken to me, I bring unto you the word of God, the word of *righteousness* ~~peace~~. The old man trembles, staggering in his rage. Flames shall fall from the sky and, like the giants who walked upon the earth, you will all be consumed by fire and brimstone. Satan waits: he has infinite patience. More vegetables fly at the old prophet and suddenly mounted soldiers appear to keep order.

What is life but a succession of captivities, a voice cries out: let us make the best of our short lives and many sorrows without the phantoms of your flames. And the soldiers press among the crowd, chuckling to one another, calling to the harlots, making light their duty and light the swords and spears of iron that they carry. They separate the old prophet from his mockers and ensure his safety: the crowd goes on about its business, untouched by the man who is the stuff of legend. And the old man's lip trembles with palsy, and ^{his} mouth drools spittle, and his eyes widen with wonder at their numbers and the great din of the agora and the banners and colors and sun-soaked faces that pass before him. He dodders on the steps of the public building, fearful, clutching his shepherd's crook. A ~~kindly~~ soldier dismounts and leads him gently, with soothing words, to the western gate of the walled town. And he trudges off into the desert, his old eyes squinting against the sun, his heart palpitating with mixed confusion and wonder. Here in this hostile desert land, in this land of captivity and oppression, in this land far from the paradise of Adam, his weak people have survived. The temple has fallen and the tabernacle has been crushed beneath the hooves of barbarian steeds, yet the sky has remained closed, the stars still sparkle in the desert night, the floodgates of heaven are shut tight. They have endured. And his brain, dried from lonely years in the desert sun, scuttling from cavern to precipice, whisked by sandy desert winds, he wonders if there hasn't been a new tabernacle, carved by the invisible hand of God out of the wounded human hearts. And he plods out toward the purple mountains knowing [^]that the day of the prophet has passed: that the temple of God is the rancour of human voices, unorchestrated, confused, raised in the struggle for survival. For God whispers into each heart like a locust, a billion different tones, a billion different words, making a darkness and a thunder against the blue sky. And he of the cloven hoof likewise roamed the desert. His face a perennial grin. His double set of eyebrows arched and cunning. His gold cat's eyes slivered against the sun. Mountain rubble could not stay his goat feet.

His cock dangled long and tapering between his furry legs. He just walked and walked, as if headed toward some particular destination but in reality too amused by the world to care where he was headed. It was all the same. The same ^{CR}~~breed-~~ulity. The same eagerness to exploit omnipotence. The same terror at his approach. And when he mounted a luscious sheep beneath the broad silver face of the moon, the shepherds would drop their crooks and run, calling for help, shouting about a demon in the flocks. And when they returned he would be gone, leaving one very content sheep whose obviously gratified expression would stimulate raucous obscenities and a wild drinking bout. And subsequently some very exceptional offspring, speckled and vigorous and great breeders. He walked on. Over foothills, dry river beds, cracked sand flats. His face as macabre as the landscape: immortal, etched with deep lines and fissures, dark sun-browned hide, great shaggy ringlets falling over his horns and shoulders shaking ~~as~~ he walked. He passed a mad prophet at a distance, pausing to watch him gurgles inanities with blind eyes staring crisp and burned into the ~~noon~~ sun. Still smiling, he walked on. And nymphs with bald cunts and full breasts fled from him, making sure, however, he followed their light footprints in the stony desert sand. And he pursued, smiling, and caught up with them, and wreaked his limitless vigor on their perfect thrashing bodies, spraying load upon load of hot goat seed into their pulsing genitals. And they didn't number their orgasms, but drifted from peak to peak of immortal pleasure. And he departed, destined to roam the earth, the forests and the primitive wastes, and the nymphs looked regretfully after him, ^{at} his shaggy receding back, chained by decree to their ^{holy}~~particular~~ grotto, or tree, or shining rivulet. And the star-filled nights swam with their tremulous songs as they consoled each other for their loss, and celebrated his ^{joy}ous return. The cities of men loomed before him, raucous, solitary, forbidding. Mostly he shunned their stench, satisfying himself with a wandering maiden found by a stream or talking to herself in the woods, gazing at lockets and false tokens. And he would startle her with his

shagginess and his sudden agile approach, but his grin beckoned and she would be thrown to the soft moss and raped again and again and she would come and her cunt juice would spurt down her thighs mingled with his thick golden come and again she'd come and again until at last her merely mortal capacity would leave her limp and barely conscious on the soft moss and he would leave her gently, softly ¹ lifting himself off her, grinning and pass on into the night. And she would be left to lie among paltry mortal lovers, weak and insubstantial, who never made her feel the intense joy of copulation, the intense joy of being a woman and of drawing from a potent male all the pleasure her womanness could encompass. Such women were spoiled for mortal men forever; they saw through the trinkets and costumes that hid weak loins and flabby thighs; they mocked the loud mouth that could play with words and vulgarities but couldn't properly suck their nipples or their cunts; they scorned the pompous fools who could offer them kingdoms thinking that they, like all women, could be bought so effortlessly, and were amused by their outrage when they saw that their offer could not hide their impotence. And these women were left lonely, lonely and adrift among the flotsam and jetsam that calls itself manhood and virility: they had tasted of the immortal juices, had sucked and swallowed that wagging goat cock and had pulled upon those gleaming ivory horns in the throes of intense passion. What was left for them among men: only the few rare mortals who had been taken by the wandering goddesses, the few men who had been taught to love ~~a woman~~ by Aphrodite ^{or} ~~of~~ Selene or Mother Cybele. Lust and longing flashed in these men's eyes: the ravaged women knew them on sight; felt an instant tingling in ^{their} ~~her~~ loins. These were quiet men, immune to the meretricious harlot and the arrogant harridan, the scheming fortune-hunter and the frigid beauty. Not the braggart liars and lechers who could take but never ^e give; nor the athletes staring at themselves in mirrors, watching their own asses thudding up and down in copulating rhythm and admiring their wet cocks slipping in and out of an incidental twitching cunt. No, these ravished men and women lived solitary lives,

their dreams beset with images of immortal grandeur, symbols of eternal verities learned most efficaciously amidst thrust and orgasm. Physical surrender and triumph had freed their minds from physical bondage by revealing at once all that the body had to offer. They were freed from frustrated lifetimes of almosts and half-ways and the growing need to discover the totality, the all. Their minds danced with freedom and mocked the hunting frenzy of the common mortal who would never know the ultimate joys of lust and love. Such greatness peoples the world, this luscious planet crawling with gods and demons and floating ghosts. Most precious of all is the mortal who has been swept into this chaos realm of magic and brings to mortal life the crystal vision of immortals: who stands back from the fray and clamor of human commerce and breathes ambrosial air and sweeps mighty mountains with hawk's eyes. Not the necromancers and embalmers, not the dry wizards with their spider's eggs and sighs, nor the horrid witches with sloppy dugs and grating cackle and their monkeys and dungstrewn familiars, nor the greedy cheiromancers and cartologists bilking widows of their pension and weak men of their slight manhood: not these, but the mighty lovers, those who share Orion's heavenly shrine, great paramour of Aphrodite, laid low by the greatness of his love and his swelling pride. I share that mighty throne in winter, his broad shoulders pendant from the galactic crux. I, and other lovers of immortals, who have been laid bare to the gods and their electric greatness. Selene is my mistress, more lovely than the evening star: she brings me gifts of poetry. And those of us who fall after our ravishment, like Orion who could not build walls to contain his greatness, or the lonely shepherdesses who threw themselves into the sea, or Lychas who stood too close to his lover's immortal rage, can whisper to each other across eons of time and parsecs of space. And we whisper of our immortal loves, its joys and dangers and of the heavenly shines and immortality that awaits us. Ganymede my special friend, encountered in the still of a moonless night as Selene's rapture overwhelmed me and I lay entombed in a shroud of infinite lassitude.

His voice, boyish, full of pride, called to me. He asked about a woman's love, since that to him was so curious. So alien and forbidden. --Bliss. Bliss of the body. The possession of, and submission to, something mysterious, something opposite. --Mine is bliss of the mind. Pride, great pride, in the arms of the Lord. --But love. Is it love? --Tell me of love. --Love is an embracing of something that gives infinite joy. A river, beautiful and pure, that is different with every second and every point of vantage. Love changes like a jewel turned and flashing in the sun. Sometimes it's physical release, sometimes it's security, sometimes it's friendship. The highest moments are moments of poetry, of divine inspiration. Love is all of these at once. --You don't speak like other mortals. Your words are lofty. Beware the sin of pride. --I am a poet and a lover. Your sin of pride has no terrors for me. I love to experience joy, not to encompass or control it. And the words that flow from me are like drops from that great river, bulbous and full, glinting in sunlight, casting forth rainbows. --You poets speak so crazily. --Yes, we are moonstruck, all of us. My lover is the moon. --It is said she does that to her men: leaves them lowing like crazed calves, staring at the stars or at a mountain or into lakes and rivers. It seems they are right. I have no time for idle gawking. The Lord keeps me busy filling his cup and admiring his martial prowess. --Ages of such triviality. Has nothing come of your love but fetching wine? --Only deeper love. --No poetry? No songs? --None. Mine is not a poetic nature. I am versed in dreams of battle and conquest and noble lenience. I would guide, rather than inspire, and build rather than design. --We need each other, you and I. I am too much the dreamer. --Let us meet in a meadow far away. --Let us wrestle. I am a skilled wrestler. --Excellent, and we shall laugh and cavort and examine our different natures. --And our different loves. His eyes smile at me from his picture in the midst of this dark night, the eyes and smiling face I long to see, the heart I long to fill with love of me. Be quiet, my heart, your words are phantoms. Swell

his eyes with deeds, val~~o~~rious deeds of mind and body. Let him see me noble and valiant. I sent him Homer which I know he left unread. What filled my childhood fancies just do^esn't stir his heart. So be it. But I will stir his heart, with love, with pride, with kinship. Let him see me the warrior and the poet that I am, that yearning mass of contradictions that so desperately struggles to slough off its muteness. Let him see me vulgar, pornographic, yet archetypal; and let him see me sublime, in converse with gods, breaker of comets. He is young and far away and I can only be an idea to him, a sad counterweight to massive others. But someday. And Joseph came unto her with wild madness in his eyes. She cowered against the wall. I am filled with the god this night of stars and comets. He fills me that I burn. Come to me. She turned from him. It is not time. It would not be proper love. The god knows nothing of propriety. See me, can't you? I burn, filled with his majesty. My loins swell, they aren't my loins, they are holy sacred vessels, loins of worship and of sacrifice. Come to me now. I want your chastity. The god wants it. She shrank further against the wall, and Joseph would have no more with words but with a harsh growl pulled her from the wall, ripped her simple woolen ^{robe} shift from her body and threw her naked and amazed to the floor. There, filled with the lord, flushed with the frenzy of the dragon and the phoenix, cluthhing her child's body with griffin-claws, he fucked her, he made her shriek with pleasure, terror, and joy. And they both knew, when the frenzy had left them like a risen cloud, that the child she could already feel stirring in her womb was the child of the god, more than any child of their own. Other children would come, of simple love+trysts, simple dancing loins, perhaps with stale custom, perhaps a little bored, perhaps whⁱle visions of others filled their ecstatic, shivering minds. But not this child. Not this child of flame and frenzy. This was a child of the ancient mad god. Sloe-eyed Isis embraced me in the dark forest, where insect-mates and seeds twirled in shafts of sunlight. She said she used me as recompense for her

lost lover made cold and immobile by his heavenly duties. My lover was limping
 Haephestus, made crooked by the vicious Hera, yet gentle and kind for all that.
 What does that make us? What does that leave us? We who have tasted immor-
 tality. Each other. To cherish. Rare, we are. Two who have known the sublime.
 Each in his own way. Isis brought me the gift of prophecy: in the chaos I
 can sort the future out with tarot cards and read the wise faces that stare
~~back~~ at me when I lay them out. Hephaestus gave me cunning, to lay snares
 and devise all sorts of marvels with my hands. See this. And she withdrew
 an object, long and slender, from her box. He smiled. So where do we travel
 from ~~her~~^{here}? Together. Always tog^oether. I love you. And I you. You will
 not need your cunning. Nor you your prophecy. I see how love makes one aban-
 don these gifts of the gods. They appear petty. Mere parlor tracks. I don't
 want to see the future whan I have you in my arms. All is too transient: we
 are mortal, our love must end. Not our love, just our bodies. Our breath.
 Where is our love without us to ~~love~~^{live} it? The feathering of comets and the
 halo of the moon. Pervasive. Persistent. Joy is too great among equals.
 My heart is both overwhelmed and overwhelming. Pity the gods who can't be
 overwhelmed by your glorious eyes. Pity the gods who bear the future forever
 before their eyes, who must foresee withering and death. Or they close their
 minds to the future, and in so doing are less than gods. Compassion arises
 from knowledge of limitation and submission to the inevitable. We mortals
 are chained. We know it. Still we survive. And even love. Yes, that is
 our glory. The stuff of poetry, the enduring. But as comets slash the black
 silent recesses of space, so also do dreams filament the darkness of sleep.
 Alley-light flickers through my heavy mind, and ~~the~~^{the} barking of a dog and an angry
 woman's rage. Oppressive are the night vapors and subtle fumes of magic incense
 that curl around me. Would that I could hurl myself to oblivion as one is
 hurled off a cliff or off a speeding train. I would hurl myself off this
 speeding planet, this precessing ball, but like as not I'd be limboed like

the moon, condemned to orbit forever in some precise path, to be watched and calculated and measured by astronomers and witless weathermen. I don't care about the prying: ~~my~~ ^{my} only important secrets are those I keep from myself.

The roots of this dream: something cries out within me, needs to be dealt with, consumed, cajoled, and finally plasticized and dismissed. I reflect facts freely and embrace this world of symbol and dream. Pity the feeble language of men, born of terror and admonition, then of the need to share the swirl and frenzy of night images and metaphors. Symbols speak through the pineal eye and address the hidden heart and inner mind. And the rational crust of life skims a meek surface, enables us to buy food and wash our cars and survive the inanity of daily wage-earning. We shun madness because of the danger to our persons and our souls. Not so much the clinical madness of poor twisted brain-fevered mutations, born with wrecked tissue and inflamed mucosa, doomed forever to a rattling cell and cattle-prods. Such isn't madness: it is bestial deformity. My dream is the madness of the Bacchante, lustful, god-savoured, filled with frenzied chase, flailing limbs, and the final mutilation of the sacrifice. There's the darkest question: what is to be sacrificed on this hallowed eve of the moon? My people fled the tabernacle of the Lord fearing that sacrifice, fled from bondage to bondage, fled from the eyes and whispers of God. Rattling jewels, all twelve, of the Urim and Thummim revealed our destiny, our oppression by the iron heel of the conqueror. Like father Zeus we would sever the phallus of the oppressor while new phalluses grew, hydra-like, to keep us from the light of birth. Unborn we squirm today as I squirm on my mattress shunning alley-light and cat call. And great Moses the Man-Slayer wandered through the desert year after year leading a reluctant and sinful tribe of nomads. His dream was mad and unreal, but no more ^{so} unreal than the living hell of the past, the unreality of complacency and eternal bondage. The fires of Sinai forged new chains, and Moses displayed the shackles to his people, feverish in mind and body, desperate that they embrace his delusion

and give it validity. And his raging mind caused the cliffs to split when they refused. Man-Slayer and Death-Stroke, Moses spelled the letter of his lord's love in steaming blood and severed foreskins. Thus, we retreat from the dreamer and delusionary. We inscribe our circles and amalgamate our logarithms and carve a myth of cause and effect out of amoeboid awe and gaping wonder. The miracle of Moses lay in his upraised hands and sparking eye: but all the followers could comprehend was the parting of the sea. That was the manifestation of their own need to transform frenzy into reality. Why in this world of dream and unreason does it all become so clear? The vapors encircling the seven spheres dissipate before the flash and flame of inspiration. O that the plodding daily world of sorry stares and empty conversations, greetings without care, lust without warmth, trials without revelations, could perpetuate the crystal clarity of my ~~otherwise~~ lunatic frenzy. I sought to break free from all that, but terror shrouds me when I confront the universe in all its uncompromising vacancy: mountains raise their placid breasts, wooded or sown with grain, and I stare back, perplexed, raised from the dead, craning to comprehend where I am and why. Too much civilization, too much din and raucous obdion: I never chaceⁿ upon a moment alone with my god, a naked Lear humbled by the whirlwind. A blown tire, and farm land, rolling hills, romance. Odd combination: terror and romance. Pleasure mingled with pain. Wry masochists we all are, you lechers, you errant and foibluus stammerers. I know you: I see you all. And out of that somnambulance you call life, you expect answers? The open sky, filled and grey with high clouds, oppressed my skull, squeezing out the juice of my weakness and terror. But I survived. I opened my fists, raised them palm upwards to the deity, and smiled. And two businessmen sat a few tables over from me, bearing the scars, in face and voice, of lost youth. I could see them as they looked when young: naive, credulous expressions on their faces, suckers for the adult myths of sex and sin. And today I hear in the tremble of their voices an echo of their childish squeals at a game

of catch or ring-o-leavio. So pontifical and manly-throated they sound now.
 Yet manliness has meant for them a flaccid nose and drooping ears, pot bellies
 and double chins and tax returns. Am I trapped as well? I'm sure they must
 have dreamed my dreams, or similar ones: adventured in back rooms or alleys
 with that wanton, terrifying woman they desired so much, so much that they
 cast aside all inhibitions and cultural restraints and plunged into her black
 steam-filled cavern. Wail for the warlock, dreamer gone astray. Wail for
 the warlock, searcher for truth. ^S Banshee mourn and sharpen blood-soaked teeth
 on oak logs and mistletoe sprigs. Wail for the warlock, my friend of many
 years. Out of mists he has summoned demons. Out of the black pool of time
 he has brought forth wraiths and specters and gaunt ghosts. I tune my harp
 in mourning for my warlock friend, fellow of my faith, initiate in the mysteries
 of blossom and decay. I keen for the loss of his soul. I keen for his shattered
 dreams. I keen for the thousand thousand snares besetting men on every step
 of this twisting road of life. Here, on this mossy rock jutting far out into
 the stormy sea, I tune my harp and pluck mournful harmonies. Here, amidst
 the slap and splash of waves, shrouded in grey skies, breathing salt sea winds,
 I pick the bubbled seaweed from my boots. Hear me, O gods, O fathers and
 mothers, O fervent saints: as I can curse, so let me bless, so let me rescue
 one lost soul hurtling to ^P perdition. You are silent, but I am a master of
 the signs ⁿ of the world in flux: I read the rhythms of the waves, I read the
 beating heart. I look to the ash and the oak, the forefinger and jointed
 digits, the lightning and thunder. Send me a sign that you have heard me and
 look upon my plea with favor. So many souls with ^e in flame: surely one lost
 to Hell can matter not at all. Wail for the warlock, dreamer gone astray.
 I see you, brother, in the solitary cell, your candle burned low and fitful,
 the night moonless and echoing with cries of owls and madmen. They wake you
 with their shrieks and babbling. They rattle their chains and slam their
 bloodied skulls against the mortar walls. Some howl like dogs, baying at an

invisible moon. Some snarl and drool with lust for the battered women, the wan and airless hags doomed to die amidst the chaos of Charenton. You know the guards ~~in their way~~ are as mad as the inmates. Madder: they tread both worlds, they split themselves between shuttered frenzy in a world of reason and rampant cruelty in a world insane. That little whore they enticed here that night, a mere child, bought with glinting coins and bonnet laced. They threw her shrieking in the cage with the erotomaniac, Mad Robert, distempered and syphillitic, scabrous with disease. How they cheered the hulking madman on as he tore off her clothes and threw her outraged body to the floor. And they amused themselves with cocks and asses and mouths while they watched the thudding rape, ogled his giant, stiff cock covered with pox and poison, pounding the girl to frenzy. When they were sated they doused the insatiable monster with bucket and cudgel and pulled him off her limp body. They wrapped her shoulders, bloodied and swollen, in a rag, and threw her back out into the dark night. And you, brother, sit in your cell chronickling this outrage. You sit bloated and ugly, dreaming of lost youth, angry at the brevity of pleasure, shouting to all eternity that the unspeakable exists, articulating the holy reproach with keen eye and sullen vision. Still lower burns the candle, the wax dripping to the table, piling up soft and hot, a wax breast which you pick and prod with nervous fingers. Light here! More light. By the gods you black beasts laugh to see my cell in darkness, darkness thick as your souls. I will burn a light when those poor others cannot. I will burn a light to shine off my chains and flash my fat bulk to the eye of the god. And the scratch of the pen silences the madness, the lunatic shrieks and laughter, and fill the cell with intimations of eternity. White man's blues: most mellow, called up from the heavy heart. Not born of bitter slave chains brutal tribal tortures, feathered and painted demons leaping in jungles, cannibal faces with ivory wedges and needles, scarred in battle and ritual. Tom-toms, infibulation, slave trading chieftains selling their brothers to

whitemen for beads and whisky. Or the slave voices echoing over cotton fields
 into vast gilded and columned mansions where black girls are sacrificed to
 the virginity of white pampered princesses. Sorry slave chains and weeping
 preachers, housed in slat shacks, fed on cattle fodder and field gleanings.
 Beautiful music that, earthy and woeful and sensual. Each note etched with
 an acid tear on the template of the soul. But not like ~~white~~^{it} man's blues:
 born of disillusionment, born of self-discovery, born ~~of~~^{of} the tragedy of ~~triumph~~^{triumph}.
 A different music that, faceted and rainbowed, bearing many faces. White man's
 blues: conquerors of a continent find themselves slaves to their own magnitude,
 slaves to the immensity of their ambitions. And the factory worker hums to
 the rhythm of his machine, the constant grit and whirr of bearings and slapping
 chains: slave chains. Born of dreams that don't end with God but fly past
 Him, as if irrelevant, to the moon and stars. She wants me in the morning/
 she wants me in the night/ ~~she~~^{she} wahts me in the daylight/ she wants me in the
 starlight... Songs of loneliness amidst millions, peopled crammed in ~~hovels~~^h
 and hives, black cities and white faces grimy with the sweat of unfulfillment
 and the torment of imagination: She wants me when she's lagging/ she wants
 me when ~~she's~~^{she's} quick/ ~~she~~^{she} wants me when she's healthy/~~she~~^{she} wants me when she's
 sick... Articulation of humor and the tears hidden behind laughter, loneliness
 of decay. She's my everlowin' woman... Look around, take in the span of
 history, like the rising and falling spirit of a single man on a single day.
 A single instant: ~~we~~^{we} are Chinese boxes, big with the seed of a thousand other
 selves. In dreams they spill and merge, war for dominance, cringe in defeat,
 flourish in victory. And the dark faces blend and swell in mists, like the
 troglodytes in burlesque houses, silent and swarming, staring at the gyrating,
 listless limbs slowly revealed on the bright stage. The eyes swell and stare
 and the girl's breasts bounce free, nipples tempted full with flicking fingertips.
 She struts her ass ^up and down the stage, hiding its dark orifice until the
 floor work, until the poetry of her motions becomes the crass gynecology of

impotent voyeurs. Stripper's blues: synchopation under hot lights: staffed
 and scored with sequins and cut-away glitter-gowns, g-strings that snap off
 in a jeweled flash. The white girl lays on her soft fur rug and spreads her
 legs: there's no romance in this dark world/ there's no shining knight to res-
 cue me/ there's just another day of smoke / and lonely hours to be free...
 The old men crane their necks and the row of cheap auditorium seats creaks
 with their collective bulk: I bought my smiles with my open thighs/ I bought
 my good times with my hungry eyes/ I bought my sorrows with a grin/ and fill
 my empty soulful nights with heavy sighs... Daughter of Solomon, cunning,
 unafraid to use her body as a weapon in the struggle for survival, unimpeded
 by sentimental inanities rendering the body a false sanctuary, she steps out
 of the shadow into the light of one hundred eyes. Her limbs are not long,
 but they are well-muscled with frequent dance and contortion, accustomed to
 awkward and lascivious thrusts for the delectation of the craning men. Her
 breasts are large and round, and she bends over, hanging them pendulous, and
 jiggles them, taunting the grinning, gap-toothed face before her. And her
 buttocks are round and firm, reflecting a pink shimmer of light with every
 seductive strut. She bends over, Aphrodite Kallipygos, spreading her cheeks,
 winking at the heavy-breathing troglodytes with her dark hind eye. And her
 pubis, full and bushy, with pendant lips too-often spread in loveless display,
 yet a gaping badge of conquest on these cave-nights when her simple exposure
 of anatomy, like a witch's charm, drives men mad. And she lays face down
 on a soft fur rug, her eyes wide with mock naïveté, her hands held behind her
 in invisible bonds: she ^uarishes submissive on the rug, open to all eyes, de-
 voured by the fantasies of all minds. I am yours, she whispers silently, my
 body is yours to pleasure with, my every body part is yours to ~~b~~^s prodded and
 fondled and violated. Nothing of mine is private, there is no cranny, no
 wrinkle, no fold of flesh that is not yours to be possessed and to give you
 pleasure. Be gentle, I am fragile as an orchid cushioned from the sun in a

sweating jungle. But if you would beat me, use me as a scapegoat for your thousand disappointments and the empty decades of waiting that are your life, I won't mind. She rolls on her back, her legs bent at the knee, her toes curled in passion, clutching the fur: they stare between her legs. I won't mind: I am your salvation, the woman you always wanted to defame but never could because you lacked courage, the daughter you always wanted to possess but were too terrified at your own baseness, the wife who never drew you close from you with vigor, always wanting, always without fire. But most of all I am that feminine part of you, that yearning softness, that vulnerable flesh that you've spent your lives denying and which you now seek to disintegrate by violating in me. Whisper of love, carnal conjugation, drifting mindless purée of pleasure, how deep do your rivers flow beneath the body's surface. Hints of times of gentleness and peace, secure hours locked in the arms of one who cares, of one who does not mock, of one who would die for you. The protean forms of love: one moment a flash and fancy, another a sublimity, still another an instant of regret, of pain. Love: drawn from the body, yet not of the body; drawn from the mind, yet not of the mind. A realm unto itself, serene and chaotic, repellent and alluring. He sits in a plain charcoal grey suit on an overstuffed chair in his living room, staring at the cone of light thrown upon the ceiling by the lamp. I would retain a part of myself, I can't give everything. I fear the loss, the pain of loss and loneliness. He fidgets his hands. I suppose an ideal love requires complete abandonment. It takes confidence to abandon oneself to another, completely. You see, I haven't that confidence. He looks to the radio waiting for the hour when he ^{can} turn it on and hear his nightly program, the man with the soothing voice who plays the lulling music. I can't believe that anyone can love me back, completely, in return. He lights a cigarette, drags deeply. I reserve myself from love, and even from life, at least a part of myself. Perhaps the part that means most. I cultivate a hard invulnerable kernel within me that refuses to be

cracked, that can slough off the tremors of despair and laugh at mockery. I am no romantic, no weeping Cyrano spouting fine words born of limitless passion. I am a realist. The clock ticks more loudly as the moon rises outside the window. There is death you know. No one is immune to that. Therefore, no love can be eternal. I could well be left alone if for no more exotic reason than the suddenness of death. He pulls his cuff down below the sleeve of his jacket, the somber onyx link catching lamplight, glinting like the eye of a jungle beast. Shall I then be consumed by sorrow when I know in advance that all is transient, all is mutable? No, thank you, but I'll keep my bit of shell upon my back. He turns on his radio and listens to the infinite silence of his room. In this my inspired sleep, my sleep of the living and the dead, my sleep of time and space, I feel the moonlight and the alleylight filtering into my brain, merging, pressing stardust and soot together into the corpuscles of my thought. How dizzy these images make me. What reason impels their form and number, or the order of their succession? There is a key. There is an archetype behind it all, fragrant of lavender and redolent of purple blossoms. There must be. O this ancient heady lotus-sleep, this sleep redolent of barbarities and limitless passions. That face in the mist. I'm certain of it, if only I could pin it down... My friends, let me address you on the subject of arrogance. Common usage of the word is pejorative. It implies an innate desire to subjugate the rest of society to the whims of an internal "I": to reign supreme over every body else, to maintain a high opinion of one's own faculties, which opinion is deemed inflated by others. Let me clarify: arrogance is used to designate the unwarranted assumption of personal worth. It differs from pride in its lack of humility, perspective, and sense of proportion. Because of this it has been condemned for centuries as a deadly sin, perhaps the deadliest. It is the "hubris" of the Greeks, so often castigated in drama and fable. Yet consider the magnitude of the universe and the infinite complexity of physical processes. Consider the ineffable nuclear processes

that produce what the physicists metaphorically term "charges" and "particles" and "energy states" and so on. Consider the undeniable bondage each of us bears in relation to these same physical processes. We are physical beings and cannot will ourselves ~~to be anything else~~ ^{otherwise.} Our perceptions are derived through physical organs that obey the same necessities as any rock or stone. Yet we as creatures barely crawling up from the mud and slime of primeval seas have developed civilizations which we claim to be predicated upon such amorphous entities as "ethics" and "judgements" and "natural laws" as interpreted by our consciousness. We pride ourselves on having risen above the level of the beast because we have broken that vicious chain of necessity and now do things for moral or ethical reasons. My friends, is this not the very apex of arrogance? Are we not assuming that our faculties of reason and conscience possess an omniscience that in reality cannot exist? We are but paltry specks in this wheeling universe imbued with a self-conscious faculty of wonder^e and that is all. We gape at the external world and at ourselves like children, and then have the audacity to construct axioms and categories and labels and then commit the ultimate folly of searching for truth. Truth, my friends? Dare I speak the word i n anything less than reverent tones? A whisper perhaps? Indeed, my friends, I have no such reverence for truth because I do not believe in its existence. I have spent a lifetime purging myself of the arrogance, the assumption of mental capacities that I do not poss^sess, that would permit me to speak of truth, or reason, or knowledge. Indeed, considered in this light, it is arrogant for mankind to survey the rise and evolution of civilisations with swelling breasts. It is arrogant to look upon a statue by Michelangelo or a painting by Raphael, or hear a symphony by Mozart or turn a page of Joyce and feel any racial pride or kinship with the creator. Indeed, it is an act of rank arrogance for any one of us to raise our eyes to the sky or form words with our lips. And yet you say we have achieved so much. No more say I than the nesting cuckoo or the diligent ant. Our achievements can be

reckoned in blood spilled, as well as art, ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ cruelty as well as kindness. It is arrogance to assert anything, my friends; indeed, this is so even of my speaking to you this evening, enunciating syllables that ultimately reduce themselves, like mesons or neutrons, to insubstantial phantoms. But I must speak because I, too, share the human arrogance that is bred within us, within the very depths of our genes and hereditary molecular structure. I enjoy addressing an audience and laying before them empty speculations that bear the ~~T~~trappings of truth: and I enjoy being paid for it, as well. (Laughter.) For, indeed, as most contemporary psychologists would have it, amidst their elaborate fictions is the assertion that arrogance derives from deep-seated fear. Well, I too fear as do you all. I fear for my physical being when I drag my weak limbs to and from my apartment to the university, when I cross heavily trafficked streets, when I scurry past sit-ins or angry minorities clamoring for more free this and more free that. I fear for my intellectual being when I contemplate a great work of art or literature or a sweeping scientific theorem that shakes the foundation of man's knowledge of himself. And I see myself growing older, not as smart as I thought I was, not as creative or productive, and increasingly disdainful of what little I have accomplished in the past. And I fear for the salvation of that mystic entity called my soul every time I walk beneath the spire of a cathedral or behold the reverence with which aged rabbis clothe and cherish their book of laws and I wonder whether, in my growing nihilism, I am not depriving myself of a serenity and peace that would make of my final end a true and real Paradise. And he shrinks and the room in which he speaks shrinks with all the shrinking people in it, leaning shrinkingly on his every shrinking word. And the building shrinks, receding, I see them through a tiny window then I see other roofs and chimneys as the town shrinks, receding and then farmland crossed with great highways and the town shrinks into a blot on the surface of the earth and then I see the great rivers that mold the geography of that country shrinking into form and pattern, serpentine

dividers and slow-flowing demarcations of industry, horizons, and childhood dreams. And the nation shrinks into the continent, the continent into the world, and the world into a limpid blue-green star with a tiny silver sphere circling it. And the sun looms furious and furnacious, passing by my right shoulder, glorious prominences curling toward me, I feel the whip of solar winds on my delicate flesh. Then the sun also shrinks, falling away, and I hurtle past the limits of the solar system, eyeing the sundry specks of planets, some green, some silver, ^{two}~~one~~ with knife-edged rings, one spinning sideways. And the solar system shrinks and merges into the galaxy and the galaxy fuses with a billion others and the totality, shrinking before my eyes-near-death, becomes a minute atom in the growing reality of another mega-universe, another spurious truth, and it hurtles past me shrinking, to grow into another disillusioned professor facing an eager audience and decrying the absurdity, the impossibility of truth. Ah, the vicarious wonders of dreams, what boundless phantasms with which they torment the mind. How they crush our shells and let our quivering slime, crepitant, awkward, tremulous ooze forth, to meet the boiling fury of archetypal ^{ss}~~ex~~istence and solidify into blond white wondering lumps. The question that Job articulated but never answered: the confrontation of the whirlwind and human reason demanding a fictitious justice. The Job-poet, rising above the fable, lost himself in the search for resolution. A deus ex machina put all to rights, restoring Job's skin and sons and cattle. But ~~S~~atan, as always, told the truth. He won the bet. Job questioned the justice and mercy of God, knowing that he had been righteous, knowing that he had lived according to the holy tenets of God's law. Either the whirlwind was a different God, a God unknown to Job and incomprehensible, and his tenets also were ^e~~therefore~~ void and mere priestly fictions or else justice is a ~~purely~~ concept inapplicable to the greater meshing of the universal gears. We do not ask if it was just that the wasp killed that particular ant and not his fellow ant to the left. We do not accord the world of beasts and vermin the

dignities of justice and injustice. Nor do we fictionalize an after-life of the soul for them, but grant them only an end and darkness. Then why not us? Why not impulsion to kindness and evil and creation and works and days and buffets back and forth along the meandering progress of time? And let it go, at that. The alleylight blends with the moon, drenching my twitching eyes in dark expanse of whiteness, illuminated shadow, desert-still, calm and malignant. That face again, a leader's face with bright eyes under heavy brows. And out of that face a wandering people, spawn of the desert, loin-lusty for pleasure and progeny, grasping food and water and shelter impelled by nomadic necessity. A dark race, Chabiru, faces etched by the relentless scirocco, hearts vacant but for lust and hunger and thirst. Chabiru, genealogy of all men and women, sons of gods, thick hewed and mighty, daughters of goddesses, moist and fertile, eager to lock loins and mighty, mighty to raise a human race from soil that can't give life to even the humblest weed. Mighty Chabiru, stern and relentless as the wind, whipped by eddies, dissipated in vortices, at odds with themselves one instant, the next instant sweeping the desert free of locust and clouds and the burning sand itself. The mighty nomad warrior, bronze and black-curled, stands majestic against the purple desert twilight, staring at the wealth of stars, ^Slightening to the crying of his loins. She is heedless of him, plucking a tiny harp, dreaming of the gods that tread the silver spaces and hurl the thunder and lightning. Her cunt moistens in the growing desert night, she envisions the tread of the gods, she catches their longing eyes and worships their arrogant smiles. To be made a mother by such as they, a star-child in her womb with silver eyes and pillar strength, the strength of granite, the beauty of desert feldspar glinting in the dazzling ⁿoon sun. He sees her reclining against a sand dune, her harp filling the night with melting chords, a women rug beneath her, and a vessel of crystal water. Her eyes vacant and staring at the increasing stars, her hands dropping the harp in revery, and wandering to her naked breasts and shrouded loins.

The harp of her mouth moans, and he sees she is hot for a man, as he is hot for a woman. And he creeps over the sand, his breathing deeper and faster, his bright firm teeth glinting in the starlight. And he startles her with his sudden erect nakedness, his tight warrior's muscles and thick throbbing cock. And she worships the sudden godhood of him, the godhood she now by choice bestows upon him and beneath the huge rising globe of the desert moon, they couple furiously, tenderly, his cock throbbing between the virgin lips of her cunt, and ^{he} arches backward for him, and he makes her a woman with his lust, and blood spills on their thighs and on her rug, and her stifled moan wafts with the desert breezes to the distant mountains and temples of the gods and into the ear of the smiling moon. They shiver with orgasm, long, endless orgasm, their nipples taut against the desert night, their eyes impassioned and rolled upwards beneath their lids. Then they sigh, uncouple, and sleep deeply in one another's arms. Where is that ancient race, scattered to the four winds, now but the gossamer of dreams? The dying city echoes with mourning voices, lamentations for the lost sons and daughters of the Great Father. Behind crumbling walls, bare brick and sagging, cracked plaster, floors strewn with discarded needles and nickel bags, bits of candles and burnt wicks, a black junkie sinks to his knees trembling. He digs his ^{hand} ~~work~~ from his pocket and ^{at} ~~watch~~es the beads of sweat slide across the veiny backs of his hands. Ancient of days, where is your spirit as he shoots himself full of horse, warm white fluid, demonic mother's milk, spoon heated, cut with quinine, and he sighs in bliss his pain gone for an hour, an hour filled with mumbling lethargy and visions. A different sloth that which nods his head and buckles his knees, different from the sloth of weeping poets and disillusioned visionaries. He, too, is a poet, a gut poet, a wall scrawling poet, a poet of deepest chagrin and terrorized intensity. He has scrawled his torment on the roach-infested wall, a phrase of shaky letters and a final plunging line pointing to his dead hand. The others found him in the night, ^u ~~by~~ thinking he was asleep, left

him to his dream. And the police covered his rotting corpse, bloated with bacterial gas and stiff with rigor mortis, and got rid of it with a minimum of red tape. Poet of the pavement, window thief and flesh peddler, surviving in the concrete city with the same rapacity and daring of ancient desert nomads. Dark was his skin and his soul grew blacker still as the days of his weakness wore on and ^{the} homes he violated grew more numerous. I told you it would be different with us. I told you we could make it if we both tried. It would have been tough enough without the monkey. Lord knows, it would have been tough enough. But you were weak and your weakness killed you and I don't hold any blame or evil in my heart just a lot of sorrow and weeping and resignation. I guess if I lived in a world of giants I would have seen you as the pygmy you were and I wouldn't have sold my soul for you and I wouldn't have bothered my mind about you, whether you were dead or alive. My mind would have been filled with greatness and wisdom and there would have been no room for the mockery of you. But our world is small, a world of ignorance, a world of tiny men with tiny dreams. We look to the future in tiny steps, a minute at a time, swept up in the hassles of our poverty and of our oppression. Oppression. We oppress ourselves. With our pushers. Our pimps. Our strutting down mean, crumbling sidewalks, winking welcome to the cruising cars, decked out in wigs and miniskirts. So easily, so cheaply we sold ourselves to the devil. And now you're out of it, but where am I? O God, tell me where am I? The days still wake for me, and the heavy nights, filled with grunts and sweat and cheap rubbers. I don't look human sometimes, when I catch myself in a cracked mirror, banged by some hulking man who grunts and sweats all over me, and see my cunt stretched or my ass, and I think I'm not human, I'm just a sometimes-warm collection of holes strung together by bits and pieces of flesh and nerves, a toy, a friction machine. Those few hours I had you beside me and leaned my body against your skinny, frail self and could see your creeping tracks and swollen veins and the age that had crept into your eyes, age

without wisdom, at least you were alive in your deadness and I could warm myself with your words. What did we know of love: but we needed each other, badly, and that's more than most. Sometimes I think of those big houses in the suburbs, with white kids playing on the lawns, and the fancy cars: and I think of the separate lives lived inside. The man in a world of business and money and nights out with women like me: the woman in a cold world of tea parties and soap operas and shopping for no reason and maybe a hidden ^{lover} filling her heart with happiness and terror and guilt. I guess it's small consolation that at least our lives, dirty as they were, were mixed together, glued together by deeds and memories and terrors shared in the dark night. Sloth is my enemy, a deadly sin. So many voices would speak to my soul, and I would chronicle them but for the heaviness, the fatigue. They would teach me if I but opened myself to them, ruptured my shell. And the voices within me, reaching out to me, pontificating, pleading, sneering, heedless or arrogant. They flush through me in a flood, in this endless nightmare, this destiny-dream, dream of myself. Voices from I know not where. How much is shut off from me in my sloth? Where my will and wont? Yet when Selene is silent, what avails it me to drag these visions out with acid or cocaine? Where is their validity? Their invalidity? Decisions, indecisions, bad counsel and revisions. Another voice: echoing, reverberating, child of mountain and meadow, captive in the dungeon of the city. The steaming roof beckons, awash with sunlight, specks of glinting mica flashing welcome from the torrid asphalt. Ugly geometries, chimneys and ledges, obtrusive poles and wires, black, unfinished, remote from the living fleshy eye that observes them. And windows, a hundred different windows each opening onto another's world, the hidden moments and secret fantasies of city-dwellers like himself. As yet they revealed nothing on the starred and starless nights he haunted the roof, staring, profound, silent in anticipation. A glimmer, a promise, and then nothing. Darkness. And our Tantalus leaps for his sins from carapace to parapet, foolish and strange with

hope, yet somehow redeemed by the further pulse in his arteries, the quickened life in his step. Toward what do we tend? What is the higher purpose of which you so often speak? The glass is lifted, water sucked. My purpose is to engender a reawakening of ^fconsciousness, a recognition of the futility of human endeavor. I do this not to create despair but rather to defuse despair. I would do this by abashing false hope and simply acknowledging ^{ing} the limitation of human aspirations. I would reveal the square battlement embodied in the circle of the human spirit and make of that squared circle my metaphor. Once acknowledged, once viewed in light of day, it holds no terrors. Then can life begin. So. Survey human endeavor: what do you see but futility and waste. Most effort is simply born of necessity, desperation, simply flowing along with the exigencies of life: I would not dignify that state of flux with the term "endeavor." No, there must be a goal. Power? What can that bring? Think of the Assyrians or Sumerians with their desert steles proclaiming So-and-So Lord of the Universe, Maker of All Things. Think of the back-room politicos scratching their fat bellies and puffing on fat cigars, ~~smugly thinking of themselves as king-makers, and trotting out some miserable, flatulent non-~~ entity to smile and gesture before the public eye. The pursuit of wealth? It has become a tiresome cliché that money alone cannot buy happiness. It is as dust, the glitter of a moment, fomenting dissension and greed among even the closest families. And after death it is dispersed by sudden though perennial winds. Glory? We live not by our deeds but by the pettiness or magnanimity of the recorders of our deeds. The judgment of history resides not in the sinews of the mighty or the intellects of the humanitarians, but in the sickly shoulders of the wan scribes and scholars who use their pens to nurse their neuroses or cater to the passions of their monied patrons, their alumni boards, et al. Power, money, glory: how meretricious, how insubstantial are these goals; and yet, in their infinitely varied forms, empire building, building a corporate monopoly, winning a Nobel prize, even simply

acquiring a newer, flashier car, these motives have provided the impetus for much of the historical activities of men. What then is real? Sheer, unmitigated survival. The billions of mouths that open hungry in the morning and close hungry at night. Yet they have scraped together enough to live in torment another day. This is real. This is ~~a~~ tangible ~~goal~~. Basic necessities, food, protection from the elements. Yet where is happiness? Where is growth? Don't kid yourselves. Amidst starvation there is no noble comradeship, there is no love. There is only rivalry for that extra morsel, resentment against that new mouth to feed, an angry grasping and clutching at straws. So now that I have picked the tawdry bones of human endeavor and brought us to the chasm of despair, is there no redemption? Allow me to wax sentimental for I believe that the only rainbow in this clouded sky is the power of love. Not the love of man for an intellectual creed, for truth is unknown and unknowable, and ultimately such love is empty. Not the love of man for his own image, for that is ultimately sterile. But the love of man for another human being: ^{SS} companionship, self-abasement, dedication, integrity. Alas, the limitations of such love. It is fortuitous: one cannot wake up one morning and plan to meet the right person and fall in love. It is transient: subject to the vicissitudes of time and the ravages of disease and death. It is chameleon: often falsely claimed ^{he} where there is but lust or a need for security and it hides its grand reality within the swirl and flux of bodily passions and emotions. And the actions inspired by love are no finer than the erring and weak mortals who love. Such then is the rainbow I profess: intensely personal, subject to massive limitations and weakness. So speak to me not of mass movements and world unity and the politicⁱization of the entire planet. All of that is mere wind, a fiction for demagogues and martyrs. We as a race will persist like beasts: ^{keep} grasping, warring, shedding blood, being kind so that we may receive kindness, until a catastrophe wipes us out or we fly to distant planets to get away from ourselves and start new worlds from scratch. Another final suck of water. And in that desperate hour I heard the dripping faucet, monot-

onous in candlelight, lulling me ~~from~~ my zeal, plaguing me with doubt. How quickly death came: the staring eyes of soldiers, taken unaware, sent sprawling and bloody by my flicked wrist and flashing pistol. Sons and fathers, flung bloodied on concrete floors, mere meat to my designs, sacrificial offerings to the goddess of liberty. I saw in each plopping drop that night the essential human face, the core beneath all variances, the eyes that mirror the quintessential soul. I saw enemies and friends and myself, dripping, dripping. In this my dark hour, far from my goddess of the night sky, the tears filled my eyes and I was shown by the devil the past and future carnage to be laid at my feet. And my tears followed the drops from the drain, dissipating down my cheeks into oblivion. ~~Everything~~ Everything had seemed so right, so virtuous, so exciting. To tangibly commit myself to a sacred cause, to lay my life on the line for principles and sacred friendships, this was surely the gateway to the New Jerusalem. But death is the least common denominator: a corpse is neither so good as it was nor so evil. The faces of my foes in angelic repose: the faces of friends, angry, sullen, demonic. The only truth was that they were no more. Cause and effect doffed their masks and stood insubstantial and invisible, bowing like harlequins before me. To weep in such an hour is a blessing. And I knew he heard me and looked to console me but would not intrude upon my grief. And he thought of the roving military out there, sweeping along the streets, swinging turreted guns and sonic detectors, and the proximity of swift death. And he shut his eyes so I wouldn't see him look at me and know ^{at} ~~that~~ he knew. But gravity had spoken and the tails of comets, and we were caught in the ^{mesh} ~~vice~~ of universal gears none of us could comprehend. An interpreter, I said. I convey my feelings about life and the world and lay them before you for final judgment. No one compels you to accept what I say. No one compels you not to take a gun and turn me in and end it all. You could easily have it back as it was. But something in my words and visions strikes you as righteous, irrefutable, as stolid and present as the Horsehead or Orion's belt. Such knowledge in its gnawing irrevocability is most discon-

solate. You can't turn to demons and fictions anymore. You have been condemned to be free. So now what? We recognize the featherweight of both faith and reason and proceed to live as the human beasts we are. Bewildered, we fight valiantly, picking our way through alley and swamps strewn with the corpses of those who went before us. Idealistic, we cover our bloody tracks with lamentation and a cunning eye. Endangered, we guard our family of souls like an enraged tigress, sleek and malignant in the speckled rain forest. But the price? I see now how strong is the magnetism of mediocrity, inertia. Rather the dull, plodding labors of slaves, the unthinking submission to taskmasters who demand of us our sweat and blood, our sons and daughters, to fuel the hydra-headed monster of their wealth and rapacity. Rather a few scant mumbled incantations and six feet of soil, quietly dug, quietly covered, than this chaos, this nightmare of bloody rebellion, this carnival of excess, this bloodshed and bullets. There is no servitude so harsh they cannot inspire meekness. I've seen some even walk up to the gallows and die without kicking. Even the rage of that final moment can be repressed, civilized. So why do I lead them to haunt the ^e~~dens~~ and caverns of this crumbling city, to bear arms and destroy the soldiers of the power elite that has dismantled all freedom? And I heard him weeping in the kitchen and saw the tears on his cheeks silvered in streetlight from the narrow window. I wouldn't let him know that I knew, or see that I saw, but I wanted to rush to him and cradle his thick shoulders and tell him it was all right, that the past was dead and there were no recriminations and that his virtue made him lead us and it was our virtue that yoked us to him. Sure, the cause was just, but more than ~~an~~ abstract cause, a political theory or an idle wish, was the reality of my love for him, a love that justified everything and made whatever we did right. His vision made me quick ^e~~when~~ I was dead, he put weapons in my hands that showed me the necessity of action in this life, of standing up in the front lines for defense of my principles and my life, and by so doing creating those principles and creating my own

vital being. None of us died sorrowfully, I would say to him, if only he'd listen in this horrid hour of night. He bore the grief of us all and made us bulwarks against despair. I rolled over and surveyed the atrocities in my mind: my parents tortured and imprisoned because they remembered the democratic days and spoke too wistfully of them among friends; the destruction of the ^eMassena Commune and frenzied rape and dismemberment of the young girls; the edicts that in glistening black ink abolished the freedoms cherished for two hundred years; the Dictator's glinting eye as work commenced with slave labor on concentration camps for undesirables: too long, the list is too long, it banishes all hope of sleep from my eyes. They stare into darkness, I hear snoring and his stifled tears and he thinks I don't wake with him and share his grief. We are one now, united on a long road whose origin is shrouded in mist and whose progress is through geysers of steam and pillars of fire. We are here and that is all. We must go forward and I will take his hand in mine and help him lead me and kiss the tears off his cheek. Comrades: comrades who share an hour and a space allotted since the first weaving of fate, when the lips of the gods first sucked at the breast of the great Ur-Mother. --Why are you hiding in these woods so late at night? --I saw something and they saw me see and they ran after me. --Who ran after you? --Three men. They had guns and they wanted to kill me. --What did you see? --I can't tell you. They'll kill me if I do. -- Don't cry now. I'll protect you. But I must know what they did so bad that they'd want to hurt a little boy like you for seeing. --There was a girl with them. She didn't want to be... --Did they hurt her? --Yes. Badly. --And you saw them hurt her? --Yes. --All of it? --Yes. --So now they're after you. Where was it, I mean where did it happen? --I don't know, I don't know, I just ran and ran and now I'm lost and I don't know where I am... --All right! It will all be OK. Soon. And the silent mosses muffled our steps as we crawled from behind the rock and made our way through the dark forest. The night was all lilac and crickets and his little

hand in mine trembled with cold. Never too young^{to} to know terror, I thought.
 No one is spared in this barbarian age. And we walked toward the camp where
 I could give him food and organize a scouting detachment when a pistol report
 shattered this night of owls and his little body flew from my hand and slammed
 lifeless into a tree trunk. And I plunged into the high grasses next to where
 he fell and huddled with him, all fragments and brittle inside, and heard their
 retreating dash through the dark forest. And when the story was told I had
 many volunteers and we scoured the forest, first finding her body naked and
 dismembered, flayed inch by inch, and then we found them and became beasts
 for her sake and his and left fragments of corpses to rot in the swampy pool
 and feed the great northern pine and the mosquitoes. That moment I will always
 cherish, that moment before his death he held my hand, a strange shadow in
 the dark night and trusted me and then even his sudden end didn't matter because
 he was cared about and could trust a strange phantom from the depths of the
 dark night. Why these oppressive vapors, these flatulent mists from raucous-
 winged Pandemonia? Why no visions of light and love and majesty? ^{Where} ~~Where~~ there
 no happy hours in my soul to waft me frankinsense and myrrh? This is a dark
 night, a night of sweat and shiver, a night when clouds obscure Selene, my
 patroness, my lover. How fugitive are joy and sorrow: immediate joy eradicates
 the cumulative hours and days of past tragedy; and present sorrow belabors the
 once joyous soul into a bottomless pit from which there seems no exit. In
 Strassburg, eighteen hundred: in Magence, six thousand: in Erfurt three thousand.
 The carnal pit, the ravaging flames, the howling mob. A once stalwart people
 reduced to fugitives and vagabonds. Why no joy, why this writhing nightmare,
 I would awake, I would awake farther from my maggot-spawned self, distant
 from the palpitations in my neck, serene and empty, drained and unfeeling,
 far from the terror in my skull. Thus he stands before me, serene and beautiful,
 tilting his oil flask and spilling the golden liquid into his palm (she has
 seen, she has heard my terror, she has come). He exudes calm as he ^{ex} ~~do~~s beauty:

the two vie for the perfection of his form. Naked he stands by the pit, his dark curls falling to his shoulders, his eyes light and intent, a faint unself-conscious smile playing on his lips. He looks at me, urging me with his eyes to hurry, eager. I tie back my long yellow hair, glinting like cornsilk in the hot Aegean sun, and anoint my fine body with precious oil. I do for him as he does for me: we, lovers of Immortals. Yet his is the frenzy of martial prowess and mine the lunacy of song and epic. This pit shall witness the battle: these great cerulean mountains shall languish rapt with our combat: the birds cackle the majesty of our might from pine limb to bending willow: the beasts envy our sheer joy in grasping, plunging, feeling the rapid thuds of hearts, our swelling, pulsing veins. I tie back my hair of flowing gold, a silken river of gold, stemmed with a thong of simple rawhide. I think of his body, assess the flex and ripple of his muscles, note the iron of his calf and the extra swelling of his throwing shoulder. A formidable adversary, this mighty lover of Zeus. I envision him bent beneath the godly torso, their eyes intent, congealed. He stares at me, watching the toss of my black curls. Let them flash in the sun almost blue and purple, though never so radiant as his golden hair. Like her hair when she has emerged from the purifying bath, I see why she has chosen him. A bit of herself she sees, a flash of that gaiety and mystic solemnity, that holy beauty of which she is progenitress. His limbs are huge, not a songster's limbs, though a poet must immerse himself in the core of the living flux, immerse himself in battle and hatred and glory and love and adventure to sing well of life. No praise of the passive and the half-dead from his fine lips. No paens to another world nor hymns condemning sin and pride and sensuality. He is sensual and proud and brimming with life's curiosity. My ken has been but the school of war: his, the depth of rivers, the height of mountains. O the marvel of his bright eyes and shining hair! --A perfect morning, this. --I would have us meet on no better. -- I thrill to see you, so gold and fiery. Too fine for a mere poet. --And you, my friend, are too fine for a braggart soldier, a toady of the martial fates.

Leave the pestilent dullness of Ares and join me on my hill. -- And you, wide-
 mouthed sir, leave your mincing breathings and join me on the field of combat
 to thrill with the lunge and thrust of manly striving. They laugh at their
 mock challenges lending spice to the combat and their shining teeth sparkle
 in the sun. --Enough, god-lover. At last we meet on this field of dream.
 --Enough, goddess-lover, your hour has come to prove your mettle in this night
 of glorious noon. Lunge and crash, breast against breast, mighty lungs heaving
 and passionate, eyes flashing, quick, seeking leverage, weakness: slap of flesh,
 slap, slap, slippery on oiled flesh, ^u muscles bulging, shoulders bent against
 the press of chest: quick hands, wrist-clasp, broken, again, broken, clutched
 ankle and mighty jolt of thighs, Ganymede raised high in the air, slammed
 mightily into the sand: swirls of sand, stinging, foggy, vortexed into churning
 pillars, marks the fall of the wild warrior: lightning kick to ankle, kick
 from hidden sands, kick from nowhere, lightning, slap of tendon against tendon,
 slip of sand, the poet falls, clumsy, ^{me} muscled, wide-eyed: cheek pressed to
 cheek, dark curl against gold, shiver of two torsos twitching in the sand:
 poet, inferior, arches his mighty back, neck braced and dug against the pit:
 warrior, superior, slides his arm about his waist and strains to press him
 down to the earth: sudden arc of thigh, a slap of meat, and dark is thrown from
 gold: swirl of sand, scuffle, clutching fingers, slippery against oiled limbs,
 dark and gold churn the pit, slashing, splashing: dark locks arm of gold, tight,
 muscles taut, panting, trips his leg, face down slams into the sand: suffocating
 instant, bite of sand, darkness: sandy arms squeeze the supine chest, sandy
 arms abrasive, thisk, relentless: abdominal flex, visions, desperate, gold
 rises to his knees and slams to earth the body clutching tight his back: grunt,
 press of bone on diaphragm, involuntary moan, expelled air, thrashing: swift
 and mighty jolt of arms, gold tossed free, spins to face the fallen warrior,
 press him at last into the sand: both roll, kick, fish in a barrel, slapping
 silent now that limbs are countered, immobile: fearing stalemate, both jerk

free and plunge again, crossface slammed across a golden beard, spin and drive
 and pinioned arms: gold locks a stray elbow, slap and wrench and rolling, spit
 of dark in sand, rolled, countered, tossed: overhook on shoulder, gold spins,
 dark cries out, arm lock, gold drives, spraying sand, kicking sand: dark rolls
 with lunge and spins faster, tossing gold with arc of thigh high into the air,
 dazed, spitting sand: dark grimace, throaty growl and lunge, thud of chest
 on chest, wide tossed legs, pinion, taut ankles: arc of back, gold hair swirled
 sharply into the sand, dark raised high: chest slammed into chest, beat it
 down, beat it down, flatten to the sand, slam, slam, slam: swift left arm
 slapped into armpit, arched overhook, wrench of muscle, twist of thigh, dark
 tossed aside, flipped high, arching higher, into the air, slammed to sand:
 pinwheel of legs, thrash and slap, vortex of sand, blinding, choking, malignant:
 pulsing brows, sweat, wet, pounding hearts, grappling for leverage, clutching
 for oiled flesh, slip, slip, slap: and the bellows lungs of the demi-gods
 fretted and strained within the granite-banded chests and their eyes grew hazy
 and spotted and their limbs, tumbling and voracious, grew heavy, sluggish,
 slow to respond and an angel descended sent by the guardians of the hours to
 halt the combat and restore the righteous progression of time which had ceased
 in awe: Jacob's angel, and he spread his wings over the hot, fuming bodies
 of the warrior and the poet, and spun off each of them, tossed for yards onto
 the cool grass of spring, tumbling, dazed, exhausted. And the planets resumed
 their courses, and aquiline Zeus descended, talons gaping, and snatched his
 lover from the moist earth, and Selene bided her time until her dark hours
 and then descended to her lover, gently, soaking his hot cheeks in nocturnal
 mist. I marvel at the alacrity with which you parted the combatants. Would
 that some spirit had taken compassion upon me and sundered me from you. Cursed,
 you scarred my loins, father of stiff-necked generations, father of dissentious peoples,
 warped, slicing at their own throats while ravaging wolves howled all around
 them. I bred a race of mad geniuses from that moment, from that wound you

seared into my groin. His face sagging in bulges and pouches, thick-bearded, heavy-browed, he descended to the side of the angel. His heavy robe whipped in the Aegean wind: the angel rested upon a rock and looked out to sea. What ^{have} ~~had~~ you done to my seed, what adder's bile ^{have} ~~had~~ you bubbled into my seminal fluid, making me the father of a battered people, a ~~race~~ of ill-fortune, an eternity of suppliants? Sons of kings and conquerors they were to be: that was my heritage and their birth-right. But you bent my seed, not enough to blessedly make me barren, but enough to make God's chosen the bearers of privation and disgrace for century upon century, millenium upon millenium. Answer me, you winged devil. Turn your golden eyes from the empty sky and look into mine, the heavy sorrowing eyes of a father mourning for his lost children. You look out upon the spheres and fires, you amuse yourself with comets and gaseous whirligigs, you sort out rainbows and scatter them from galaxy to galaxy. But I, their patriarch, can but turn my eyes toward dust and weep for their undeserved torments. Speak to me, justify yourself to me: he raised a palsidd fist and shouted so that all the world rattled with his voice: or be damned to you! The angel slowly turned his eyes from the sea, the sparkling agate sea, and gazed into the old man's eyes. Your rage does not amuse or repel. Like the sea winds and the birth of gods, it must be. Rage if you must, and bear upon your shoulders a guilt-tithe for your lost people, look to your blanched and scorched seed as the germination of woe: it is all one to me. Pain there is and joy, and sorrow enough for a world, and joy for a world and the wisdom of the universe lies far beyond the narrow span of your vision. And the angel turned back toward the sea. That is no answer. You hide behind words of mystery as behind your wings of awesome gilt and crystal. What of the covenant? What of the rainbow's arch and the words graven in stone? Don't turn your eyes from me and my people. Rectify, or admit you and your god lied. And the angel smiled and pointed to the sea. There is my god, and arched in the firmament above and embodied in the whisper of the wind passing

my ear. What can lie that cannot but whisper and intimate? What bonds are
 joined when the language is metaphor and symbol? You would constrain the mighty
 universe to a truth and a promise that exists only in the petty mercantile
 mind of your species. Because you rant and fume and vituperate, you would
 have answers in like tongue. Because you wither and die, you would have god
 an old robed man like yourself, a father to cherish you and pat your back
 and say well done. God whispers and titillates my eyes and ears with secret
 languages and hidden symbols which I have studied for a million millenia and
 am no closer to comprehending. I am as alone as you, a wanderer among the
 stars and planets, and I am witness to the joy and grief of an untold sea of
 planets. Cease to ^{Rage,} my old friend, and join me in serene tales of the way of
 the worlds, tales of adventure and parables, and mysterious recitations without
 meaning or plausibility. For I would share my vision with you and ease some
 of your bitterness, still some of your gall. The old man scowled, turned
 defiantly, and sat upon a rock. I see you would not be calmed. Like the winds
 of lust, you have churned so many centuries that you have become your rage,
 your fury. What is the dancer without the dance, as the poet says. You create
 your own illusions and then storm and howl when you find them false. How
 curious you all are, you race of men. An old man's patriarchal profile, turned
 away from the sea, silouhetted in magenta twilight, sullen: an angel, broadly
 smiling at the sea and the ~~pendant~~ twilight goddess shining like a jewel ⁱⁿ ~~on~~
 the glowing sky. I had held the legends to be false, myths, illusions, the
 outcries of ignorant savages sent scurrying by thunder and the ~~flash~~ and glory
 of lightning bolts. I held the legends in contempt: a wicked, petty people
 needing a taskmaster to curb their passions and keep them from each other's
 throats. A dark room, filled with shelves of arcane books, scrolls, parchments,
 a Solomon seal hanging on the wall: he writes in the still night, the moon
 long past the horizon, a single thick candle pressed onto a skull, dripping
 hot wax: thick-browed, scowling yet frightened, his philosopher's mane gone

white, his beard flowing onto his lap. It is easy to be so arrogant when the age of miracle is past. When no longer do Samsons stride the earth, bearing off huge city gates and battling lions with bare hands. When charlatans and soothsayers monopolize the traffic in old women and read their tea cups and rap on tables in shrouded rooms with hidden recesses and ingenious gadgetry. When prognosticators and astrologers speak in vague yet profitable generalities, yet cannot keep themselves free from a simple fracture of the toe on the basement stairs. The intellectual poverty of the human condition cannot help but breed arrogance in the man but half blind. But then, as with me, the ageless seed is found and sown amidst potent incantations and the veil tears, leaving nought but wonder and remorse. How beautiful he was when first he gleamed amidst the sulphur fumes and parted the mist with his cunning smile: a face inhuman, burdened with knowledge denied the most scrupulous angels, privy to even the hidden thoughts of God. God's equal, though even God's godness was an accident of fate, while his was sought and earned. Arched brows and eyes like glowing tapaz, a face gaunt, sophisticated, with bright even teeth that charmed in a smile and terrified in a frown. Beauty not fallen but different, changed as servitude became rebellion, rebellion the freedom to address God as an equal. By no means evil: he is truer than the delirious vision that promises Heaven, or a multitude of sons with which to build a new race, or praises human endeavor, affording it eternal crowns and sceptres. He is truth personified, and that is why we fear him: he sees us for the flies we are, tempts us with honey, swats us with the back of his hand, shows God the feebleness of his handiwork. He mocks with the mirror of his intellect our citadels of dung. He seduces with his candor and veracity and we fall like straw dolls before his pity. Yes, in that arrogant bliss of rebellious youth, when all pontifications and holy truths and somber sermons shrivelled before the glare of my intellect, and all the world's knowledge was overmastered, I burned with the bitterness of the stars, contemptuous of my fellows and enraged that I

possessed no angelic wings to fly me to the endless bounds of the universe where my mind would wander. And yet today I would eagerly embrace my former limitations. Then, I could dream and walk with pride. Today I sink in Hell: not the child's Hell of monsters, flame and stench, but the Hell of absolute knowledge, the knowledge of my ineluctable unworthiness, the knowledge of innate human bestiality. And what hurts most is that he pities me, all of us. He doesn't cackle and gloat and wring his hands like a hungry wolf: no, he retreats into the solitude of shadow when the visions are upon me, a chapel of silence and compassion, and tears drop from his eyes as I wail and weep and flail my aging ^Rarms. Why show me these truths, I shout, why torment me? I came at your summons: I will depart when you wish. And I cannot send him from me. Some twisted fiber running through my soul compels me to unravel the entire mystery, lay the darkest ^Kfates before me regardless of the consequences to myself or my race. I take no pleasure in what I do, he tells me. Amidst my fumes and crucibles and distillations, amidst my parchments and steles and amulets, I discern his haloed divinity, the simple lines of his long limbs, the unpretentious lowering of his eyes. O God, this cannot be the final jot: this cannot be the solemnification, the closing of the book. Is there no redeemer? Is there no hope? But the first moments of sleep held no such terrors for me. Repose, relentless, dignified, swept me into its suffocating embrace with seductive ease and simplicity. Retreat from thought: wanderer amidst images so sporadic and confused they were harmless ^R. But now? An omen, I feel it deeply, an omen of momentous things, of things grand and unnameable and catastrophic. I keep seeing that face, gathered now amongst others of its kind, a shaman, working souls out of clay and red ochre, smearing limestone walls. Why? Why that face and those thundering drums, crackling hollowed logs, flame-scooped, tattooed by twenty-six bronze arms. Something catastrophic, a kinship, what? A view from the sea-sluiced warmth of pre-nativity. A cone of yellow light ascends from the lamp, sectioning the corner

of the room. She sits pensive, swollen, her knees bent apart, her ankles crossed. Smoke curls from the Pall Mall burning in her trembling hand. Soon we'll know. Soon, if it's like the others: just scabs of dead flesh. Don't think such things: put the ~~jinx~~^{ix} on this one. She drags long and slow on the cigarette. Don't see why I should care. Who needs it? My nights won't be any brighter, just more tiresome. He wants it: a boy. I hope it's a girl. I hope it's a girl to fix him. He just wants to pass himself on to the future, make up for the mad ones, those crazy others with their drinking and insane asylums. Does he think he can reclaim the past? Does he think that a weak yelling baby will atone for his sins? I don't envy it, growing up with that burden, expected to compensate for fifty years of mistakes and wrong choices. It'll turn out like any other child: spoiled, troublesome, soon lost to gambling or drinking or women. For so short a time do the mothers have anything to say: they're grown and gone and all the feedings and the cleanings and the heartaches are forgotten. Even by the mothers except when they strain to remember, except when there's a particularly bitter fight and you'd like to tell that bastard kid, Hey, you owe me. They resent you. They resent that you remember them with shit in their pants and that they cried a lot, and that they picked their noses. They resent that you know their idiosyncracies and terrors, their secret fantasies and puppy loves, so damn well. It's just as well the time is short: I really have nothing to say to it, no wisdom, barely love. I didn't ask for this: I wanted something else, something different, I don't even know what. So now all I can do is ~~just~~^{ix} sit and wait for it to happen, for the rush to the hospital and the gas mask. Thank God for that gas: out, and then it's all over: learn your fate. Been kind of lucky so far. Third's the charm, they say. Kicking again: not weaker like the others, but stronger. Maybe if it's a girl... no, no joy in that, I don't see anything of my own immortality in any of this. If I did, would I be pleased? Not likely. Men seem to always think they could have made up for the world, that if they

had only done this or changed that the whole show would have been different, better somehow. Women don't have such delusions. We learn early all the limits, all the roadblocks, and that's why we become cunning so early, and learn to use the magic spell of our ~~tits and cunts~~ ^{bodies} against them. We don't posture and bumble like fools, we can't afford to. We bear adversity while they rage and fight and leave us to mourn. I didn't want any of that: I wanted it different. I could have been a dancer, ^agreat ballerina, they all said how talented I was, I pirouhetted like an angel. Now look at me: blown out like a watermelon, ankles swollen, waiting for this farce to end. Another long drag on the cigarette. If it's a girl, she'll only turn to him anyway, that Oedipus thing, and leave me in the lurch. A woman can't win. And he won't be happy then, he'll just keep trying, keep putting on her tiny shoulders all the grief he had with those first daughters and that other drunken wife. A son he wants, a big deal son. Doesn't he know he's too old? What good is a son if you're going to be gone by the time he's seventeen? Just when he needs you most. Another drag. Why are my hands shaking? I'll be around after he's gone, that's almost certain. Crushes cigarette in ash tray. Somehow these things never work out the way you want or even the way you expect. And a manchild was born born unto the tribe of Dan amidst much rejoicing: timbrels and castanets and golden cymbals made resonant the streets. And he would be unto his people a solace and a cause for rejoicing. And he would carry the firebrand and the jawbone unto the Philistines, yea, unto the portals of their houses and unto the inner sanctums of their heathen temples. But what of the sorrow of the missionary and hero? The agony of the chosen, reluctant, preferring an aged obscurity to a turbulent youth and a sudden tortured end.

^How many thousands turn from the call, preferring to be clerks and accountants, quiet men and women with quiet lives, than to hoist the heavy banner and lead their people to freedom. Yet at the end they suffer: their spirited souls rebel at last and survey their empty lives with profound remorse, for the blissful serenity of the common man is a sham and an outrage to these chosen

martyrs, a shell and a scourge. So they die, every one, with a snarl and a leaden heart. But out of the flames of oppression his voice arose, a voice encrusted with the overtones of prophets and revels dead for centuries. The people gathered around his podium, the tribes and nations, the disenfranchised, the disillusioned, the disheartened. Gold he shone in the sunlight, gold in this lull between storms, the grass still damp from the downpour. They came in vans and volkswagen, by motorcycle and plane and train, they came with sons and daughters and nursing infants, they came before this gathering, this last gesture of free political expression, which could at any moment be disrupted by the police, tragically, and legislated into illegality by the criminal legislators huddling on their dark hill. Citizens of America, we have failed to heed the warning of the Founding Fathers who braved the noose and the musket to free this land from the bonds of tyranny: their wise admonition that the price of freedom is vigilance was born from the daily threat of outraged arms, the daily threat of the conquering soldier's knock at the door, the daily threat of blockade and starvation and slavery. We have failed in our vigilance because we have grown groggy with ease and luxury. We have left the business of government in hands hundreds of miles away from our homes, in hands sprung from an economic elite that knows little of, and cares nothing for, the daily struggle of the common man. We have lost the thick hot revolutionary blood that flowed once in our veins: that blood flowed when we saw this nation divided, master against slave; it flowed when our forebears left their roots grown tangled and choked in despotic soil and came to our shores to build new lives in free air and a free society; ~~it flowed when we marched against the abomination of the war in Vietnam and against the lunacy of Nixon and Agnew, the despicable frauds and criminals that history has revealed them to be~~ and now we have grown fat with ease and triumph, thinking that the struggle has ended. So little have we learned from history. Just this once I would like to see our nation united and battle a cancer before it has spread to intolerable propor-

tions! (Thunderous approbation, line upon line of mounted police, their horses snorting, ready their clubs) They have already legislated away our freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They have mocked us with their fat lips that such documents were the products of a young, naive frontiering nation, totally inapplicable ^{to} the nation of today, stolid, prosperous, a mature corporate giant, eminently rational, eminently business-like. They have made it a crime to expose governmental abuse of power: a crime to protest the criminal activities of our legislators and their appointees: a crime to seek redress of grievances: a crime to protect our homes and the sanctity of our private lives from concealed intrusion by government agents: even a crime to educate our children in the revolutionary and libertarian tradition that has so long been the heritage of our nation. And, fellow citizens, by the time these words fall from my lips, they will have legislated this gathering into ~~the realm~~ of crime, and the armed and armored police you see all around you will be given free reign to indulge their vicious and narrow-minded bigotry with brute force. (Uneasy ^wacknowledgement, knots of demonstrators cluster more tightly together, hearts quicken in resolution and terror) Fellow citizens, I have come to stir you up to mutiny ~~and~~ to rage: the dictators who have taken our lives and fortunes from our ~~own~~ hands must be shown that even sheep, when trapped by ravaging wolves, will bend their horns to the enemy and fight unto their death! (Thunderous approbation, news cameras roll into position, helicopters circle the gathering like bees around the Washington Monument, poised) Already small units of patriots have risen to fight this injustice: they have expropriated arms and money and war materiel. I will not pretend to chastise their actions: indeed, I have led these groups for months now and I praise their valor and unfailing strength. (A gasp from the crowd, then approval: they had ^{suspected} ~~known~~, now it was confirmed. A riot near the podium as police try to arrest the speaker but are shot down by stalwart partisans who have suddenly bared their fangs) See, see, the battle begins while I speak these words!

Join my army and myself up on the hill where we shall return the organ of government into the hands of the people (Chaos, yet a planned chaos: trucks appear to rescue the unarmed, the children from the melee. The sheer mass of the partisans hampers the police. An army of motley, armed ^{en} persons emerges from the crowd, protect^sing the unarmed, hurrying them to safety. The police who heretofore had become expert at beating and maiming the unarmed and fugitive are completely baffled and ultimately decimated, their arms confiscated, their survivors driven to ignoble retreat) Glorious that gestation and moment: yet like all early successes, brief and transitory. The woeful months and years still playing the threads of that violent uprising. Yet never has such thought and smell of freedom caressed our senses. Though we die and bleed and grow wan with struggle, there is an electricity among us like unto which few chosen people have felt. Yet it tosses my body in repose, the sweat is cold and beaded, the alleylight mocks my tight lids reproachfully. The past, the past: a succession of moments, tableaux, held frozen in the mind, left to instill wonder in the unseen turn of the future, the quick^R that sneers and swells and counts its dead in truckloads. Save me from the past that I may behold only the future-in-transition, the unfolding dream ^{and} not the terrible price, not the machinations and deceptions. But I must remember the virtues, the self-sacrifice ^{and} heroism that is the hallmark of the best of mankind. Listen, what do those fancy words have to do with me. Say, I don't have time to worry about your principles or your heroic future or your breaking chains ^{with} ~~what~~ the past. The past has done all right by me, if I can only protect myself and my family from the heroic future you and your ilk plan for us. His tea was brewed sweet and rich, and we stared at our cups: she hovered around us in the kitchen. Fugitives, they took us in, bedded us, fed us. We sat silent, listening. See, I work hard at my job and I don't make a lot of money but enough to keep me and my family clothed and fed and sheltered. And now I'm just glad to have a job. All my friends were tossed out, lost their homes, and they just hang out getting

angrier and angrier. And it's because of you: disrupting the government,
 creating chaos, preventing the use of government for social purposes instead
 of chasing you people all over God's earth. His lip twitched and his eyes
 pleaded. I had dreams once, ideals like you, but they're only for kids: the
 real world goes along on compromise. That's wisdom. Look at all your philo-
 sophers: rational, reasoning, willing to meet the other guy half-way. Where
 do you come off with guns and killing and thievery? You may not like the system,
 and God knows it needs changing badly in many ways, but what do you think you'll
 think of your world, this world of hiding and killing, when you're a few years
 older and start to tire out? Tell me that. She felt it impolite for him to
 talk so to guests: a mother's love for wayward children fleeing in the night.
 My heart went out to them and their human kindness transcending convictions
 of error and evil. But how sterile and stony these speculations on the politic
 life of man: where the grandeur and the sparks, the forge of the gods smiting
 quartz into men and men into nations? How pitiful we are, dull at our labors,
 dull until even our dreams dissipate into the cadence of the assembly line
 and vanish forever. And the charlatans parade a thousand false dreams, a
 thousand empty globes, until we turn our backs on even the one true dreamer,
 the Messianic honey of redemption. Where is poetry in life, where the age
 of epic? And the trembling peasants stood by their burning cottages while
 revolutionary Cossacks smited the kingdom of the oppressor. Their hard-won
 freedom means but destruction and rape for the silent masses, the masses who
 bear the guilt of their silence and the guilt of their acquiescence. They
 took his infant son and flogged him to death before his eyes and left the farmer's
 hills thinking a lesson had been taught. The torment of one man, a father's
 anguish, swelled into a torrent of blood and reproach and Cossacks rose against
 their Polish oppressors, paying back like for like, a thousandfold. History:
 the meager recitation of events without their corpuscular poetry, the rhythm
 of their reality. The poet bends above his unlined sheet and sorts his visions,
 slave and master, neither virtuous nor evil, neither friendly nor opposed:

and from his poet's battlement creates a world where^ein his passions have full reign: a world endeared, of characters cherished, molded to his liking or to arouse his indignation. And he descends onto the field of carnage, weeping in agony, howling with joy, no more aloof^f, no more inured to the meagerness of history. Then his epic lives more truly than the sorry times of which he writes. But what is left us? No more redeemable, our tickets are void and out of date, our promissory notes have fallen due and we are bankrupt. Too many of us, billions too many, and we choke on our own filth and live amidst each other's paucity and squalor, How sharp the alleylight sears my dream, incandescent, unnatural, stroboscopically slowing all motion of my dark visions, making them burn and scald and torture. Selene: goddess, sunk below the waters, awaiting resurrection, I must capture your eternity and press your silver softness ever in my palm. After the annointment, what? So I'm left on this rock to bear the waves and the salt and the corrosive barnacles and shake my impotent fist at the raging storm. I survive on shells and maggots and grow lean on frustration. I, your lover, your annointed, your chosen one. And the jealous sun burns my flesh, peeling it into the scorching rocks: my soul, dismembered with pain, prodded by demons, weeps for you. Will you answer after death? I cannot hope. I care not for that other world, that mire of ghosts and calcite shells. Death holds no terror for I shall live in my song and betray the confidences of your immortality to the humblest sea-borne breeze. So I ^bfind my curling, salted hair in a wreath of seaweed and stroke the mica and the granite in rhythmic beat, and listen for the pulse of my heart come crying off the surf. I will live amidst this leanness: I will triumph over the starkness of stone and shell. And the hordes trembled beneath his upraised staff, and his god-drenched visage glowed defiant and the waters churned and parted, whipped like dogs into their separate dens. And the hordes passed along the dry sea bed, stumbling among conch and scallop, reverent and swift. The memory of this miracle shall depart from them. Their frail mortal minds

cannot retain such eloquence of sanctity. You have shown me your face in the fiery bush and it has been my death. And now I lead them to rebellion and torment and infinite grumbling. They cannot bear this journey out of the land of bondage: they will make of every new land a realm of chains. And they will be scattered to the corners of the earth, and make of my ecstasy codicile and tenet, pinions and iron bonds for their minds. Within the surge of seawalls, the dolphins frolicked and the shark, and spinning jelly-fish glanced against the airy partition and squirted back to darkness. The tribes saw leviathan, open-mouthed, toothsome and threatening, and gasped in horror. But theirs shall be the savage soul of tribulation, the desert spirit spawned amidst sun and sand and dry grass: the desert spirit triumphant, inured to adversity, fertile as the cactus, filled with milk and thorns. And their desert hearts shall rage and swell and cause motion in the earth. The parted waters spilled together in cataclysmic embrace, their pursuers, ageless Egyptians, drowned unshrived. Far from the lord am I, and near, a pendulum etching arcs in sand, carving time, and precession and sweeps of space. The desert hordes are many and violent: they strike in the night, amidst the fumes of love and the mindlessness of sleep. They strike swiftly, with sword and flame, burning tents and freeing beasts of burden from their tether. They strike the meek with the bold, the carefree with the contentions. And justice, you ask? That a child should be run through with an iron blade: can he understand that it is demanded of him he not breed? They fear our race. The dark-eyed daughter of the blacksmith, carried slumped over the back of a pack mule into an oasis hidden miles away and there violated by the greedy hands of an entire tribe, their stinking bodies, sweat-drenched, and their genitals caked with dust and dung. It would have been more just had she been killed and not left alive in the desert, naked, to wander bruised and gashed, mindless. The justice of the descending hawk, the place in this universe for the predator: thing of impulse, desire, lust. Justice is a fiction in this aviary of sand and

rock and concrete tombs. He stood pressed against the wall, hidden ⁱⁿ a shadow. They were returning, the police said they would finish the job, it had been too easy. The blind musician's flat: unkempt, passable only to his sightless eyes and tactile senses, the agility of a cat. Few possessions, yet essential, and the scum were returning to finish off the job. He tensed against the wall, the window gate fell open, again, to hushed laughter, a blue-jeaned leg and boot: the heavy geologist's pick, flat side down, slammed into the center of his afro and he fell unconscious off the ledge and onto the piano. His partner, junkie-thin, tried to jump back out, but the pointed side slashed into his thigh, hooking him. Blood covered his hands, he yanked him in and beat him, over and over, with the pick, with his fists, his iron body slamming the junkie against the wall, leaving bloodstains. He handcuffed the second and made him watch as he unzipped the ~~zip~~ ^{fly} of the first and cut off his wrinkled uncircumcised cock and stuff^{ed} it into his mouth saying I'm doing this to you too so watch not because I'm sadistic but because others like you must be deterred: this building is not an easy mark: the cops and the jails can't stop you so I must protect myself and my wife and my friends by making you two the stuff of legend: so watch and listen to him groan: and tenants gathered to watch the slaughter and await the police: rip off a blind man you scum, you scum: and one screamed then fainted, a cinderblock heaved, smashing flat his face: now you, and the other's cock was out, and he cut it off and the blood sprayed all over and he shoved it into his face and he carved a warning to other junkies into his flesh and then put them both out of their agony by slitting their throats. A cop threw up when the bodies were found, but it made good press, and nobody hit that building for a long time and none of the tenants saw anything or who did it. Brutality of survival: a jungle this life. They're after ~~your~~ ^{your money} or your mind. I rapped to husky Alan after the party, his broad face glazed, surfeited. Either they beat you with clubs or with their idiotic bourgeois values: the all-mighty dollar, the mediocrity of consumerism, the necessity

of wage slavery in the capitalistic system. Alan raised a fat forefinger in agreement: I want to get laid, but first, more dope. He lit a joint thick as a cigar. ~~Or almost~~. The acrid smoke filled the car. They were parked by a dark lake and I stared out at the night-drenched water. Laughter from some guys near the trees feeding acid to a duck. I envy you: to wipe away the heaviness with smoke. My life scares me. I can't reconcile my beliefs and ideals with either my environment or my actions. I'm looking for a direction and the contradictory parts of my personality pull me in a thousand different ways, down a thousand paths. Alan sat like the caterpillar with a hookah: you want it all to make sense. It can't. So don't bother about it: you'll stumble along like the rest of us. I looked into the rear-view mirror staring at my cat's eyes. I'll have to cultivate an ironic sense: to push it all aside with a joke. It's just I feel so alone. I feel like the doubts I have about my presence on earth are the first such doubts ever. Yet, I know that's ridiculous. Alan nodded: you are seriouser than most. Sometimes you sound like an old man. Maybe you are different. The malaise of the bourgeois, I thought. Maybe if I were poor I wouldn't have time to worry myself with these futile speculations. No time: no esoteric worries. Just sweat and muscle ache. But no, it's too late, I can't reforge the mental hymen of my innocence. I have seen, I know, and I'll always be plagued. I need to find an answer, not a cop-out. And we drove off when the red light flashed around the corner and the cops chased the guys in the park and I'm sure a night was blown calling parents and frightening kids with apocalyptic premonitions: they'd never be doctors or lawyers with a record. And the poor duck was seen days later still flashing from the acid, stumbling like a quacking circus clown. I lured her perfect body into my basement with grass so I shouldn't have expected too much: I sought a mystic revelation from sex, a deepening of my human faculties of understanding. She approached it like a performance, like taking a shit. Too late for words, those moments of intense



denial when the inspiration clogs and everything you hoped was fraught with meaning stands naked and repellent. Her breasts were like balloons filled with water, with tiny nipples. My body was hard and eager. I wanted to say speak to me of ages past when your beauty first washed upon the Cyprian shore and the gulls and curlews heralded your magnificence with raucous cries: speak to me of the kings who lay themselves at your feet and sought the blessing of your lips: speak to me of the thousand ships that parted the Aegean and sacrificed ten years ~~for~~^{of} warfare in your honor: speak to me of the musket balls and poisoned draughts that lovers used to sacrifice themselves, from grief, at your altar. But she would have understood nothing as I could not understand. So I spoke to her of her large eyes and beautiful body and said she was a goddess. And she smiled, a sixteen year old goddess' smile and opened her legs, her cunt moist, and guided my cock into her and we fucked and fucked and sweated like Olympians, resilient, perpetual, timeless. And she would return to her dip-shit boyfriend and I had a universe to conquer. So we parted. Selene, you are the mucilage of my thousand yying parts: inspiritus, overwhelming, making a sanctuary of my solitude. Who else will understand: what do I care? Images spurt from me like come, I as I am, unalloyed. Let those who will hear, hear: the rest, turn elsewhere for the lyric fragment that will wound your heart. Duped by scholars in a scholar's idiom, I lost my way and separated from myself. Away from myself. The circle's full. Or apparently so. I return, lost, bewildered, yet somehow I seek, where before all thought of search and redemption was denied me. And I tore^e the bronze hinges off the gates, and with my bare fingers I wrenched upon the carved head of Baal, carved in iron and ringed in brass, and the gate toppled and fell to earth with a resounding clatter, and the dry sand^s rose in great swirls, and the wind raised by the fall twirled the great curls of my hair in undulating caresses. And I, a mere man, but filled with the spirit of God, raised those gates upon my shoulders and carried them back to her tent where she awaited me with warm

eyes. Daughter of my enemy: bride of my soul. Maligned by a narrow, godless
 people, worms in the corpse of a great dead giant. Betray me: she it was who
 strengthened my loins and made me feel the power of God course within my veins.
 And God spoke to us both in a night, filling us with his message and his plans
 for sacrifice. She wept at her heinous role, and I stroked her hair and God
 turned from us, brushing His hand against His forehead, seeking words. What
 must be done must be wrought by us both: otherwise, our souls will separate
 and I would not have it so. They will call me whore and traitress. And I
 will call you goddess. My name shall be anathema for generations. They are
 fools that trust in the bondage of their wicked fancies: they are without
 understanding who are not filled with the inspiration of God. Not fools, my
 love: merely unchosen. You are too merciful. They mock me for my strength
 thinking my mind must be weak. They frown upon my lusty rutting in the green
 fields with you and your handmaidens, and our cries of joy and my obscene
 growling. They think that God is their withered high priest, impotent, senile,
 bigotted, trembling in fear before the natural drives^{of} men and women. Then
 why this sacrifice, my love, if they are so vile? Let us live long and happily,
 just you and I and God. The Father stared out upon the purple mountains gazing
 at the wooly flocks. I am His son, you His daughter, we must do that which
 he has ordained and sanctified. And the Father turned to them, His face wise,
 young, and smiled: Metamorphoses, that is all; your love nor spirits shall
 die. Accept of my munificence the bounty of a thousand worlds. That's how
 He spoke to us that night and we were calmed and could begin the great drama.
 I am so many, Selene, I crowd upon myself, flush my guts with my magnitude.
 Where the invisible thread that unites my multiplicity of forms? For ~~therein~~^{therein}
 lies knowledge of God, for that is the part of me He visits and the part that
 breathed a soul's life into it from His nostrils. This talk of God: abominable
 fiction. I submit, then rebel: let him seek me, not I him, for am I not as
 great as he, am I not his ineffable spirit made flesh? Where is my stain and

where my halter that I must butt and rankle in this sty of a world, unannealed?
 Mine is the rebel's cause, Satan's struggle. But if I return in spirit to
 the ancient of days, to the thundering gods and the satyrs, can I carry upon
 my broad shoulders the democracy of the multitude, the freedoms of the feeble?
 Let not my raucous call for rebellion dissipate the hard-won freedoms of the
 past: though they be the freedom of mediocrity. But madness this, this futile
 wind of freedom: freedom, if it is, is ⁱⁿ ~~an~~ the ^m ~~mind~~. If it can be granted,
 then we are but toys and not worth the merest energy of thought. But if it
 grows from will and intensity, then we outshine the noon. O this night: it
 carries me mad and contrary, buffeted by winds of passion to a thousand shores.
 My sloth has turned on me, sleep has warmed itself with mushroom wine and I
 wriggle through a carousel of transformations. What is this poor bit of flesh
 that so torments itself with visions and spotted thoughts and emotions sparking
 physical responses. I toss, I sweat, my lungs heave: still no surcease, no
 sweet slumber. Thus did she that ⁿ ~~right~~ of fever: we slept in the empty moun-
 tain cabin, deserted, in retreat: her fever grew, she tossed delirious, called
 out to old lovers, her first lover: always the first, they weigh so heavily
 upon the soul. Remorse; remorse: the death of old dreams, disillusionment,
 the prince ^{ce} ~~or~~ princess becoming swineherds, the world ~~appearing~~ bereft of
 royalty, nothing but swineherds and shepherds. We held that cabin for a week,
 I nursed her wound, I rarely slept. She lived. A rare triumph in ~~my~~ life.
 All of us exist on the brink of delirium: a millimeter ^{te} ~~below~~ the convoluted
 grey, perhaps, we are mad, and often that mad tissue drips upward striking
 us in daylight or slumber, shattering the facade of reason and making us
 unaccountably joyous, joyous unto song, or despondent, blacker than ~~the~~ souls
 in Hell. A millimeter of civilization, inch upon inch of dark bestiality.
 What grave mysteries must lie there concealed: primordial powers, the strength
 of a dinosaur: the pineal eye: racial memories of incest and ^{patricide} ~~father~~ murder
 and taboo and tribal sacrifice. That face again: primitive yet Messianic,

a prophet, a first prophet changing all that: miracle worker, first lord of thunder, archetype of Zeus. Could it ...? I don't expect you to reconcile my strength and weaknesses. He walked beside me in the park, my youthful eyes, cat-like, gazing into his, serene and blue. We held hands. I'm not perfect^s, nor am I the epitome of evil. I can only give you advice that comes from my years of mistakes and my many experiences. His eyes grew distant. Take it for what it's worth: the only lessons you'll really learn are those you live through. The hard way. All else are platitudes, and almost worthless. And don't be surprised to find that I don't take my own advice. I am like the philosopher who cannot reconcile the body with the mind, and wishes to understand both, so lives a great long life in bewilderment and contradiction. He smiled that precious father's smile, his teeth bright and even, his smiling cheeks etched in stark relief. Don't look for perfection in yourself or anyone else: it's not there, and if you expect it you'll be always disillusioned and your life will be eternal misery. Don't despise those less fortunate than you: if God gave you gifts of intellect or physical beauty, they were not meant to set you above the rest of the world, but merely to manifest the skill with which He can mold this clay: your gifts should be used to compensate for the misfortunes of others. The things of this world are transitory: that I know, though I don't know anything about the next world, or even if there is a next world. So don't hesitate to make yourself and others happy by being generous and charitable and unshackled to money or fancy things, cars and such. The richest man in the world can ~~make~~^{acquire} the biggest pile of things, but if it costs him his health and his happiness, what good is it? And when he's dead, it's all spread out on the wind, to relatives, or the state, or whatever. Neither should you despise the pleasures obtainable with moderate wealth: you can't experience the joy of benefaction if you, yourself, are starving. And this life of ours is too short, too full of troubles, to live as an ascetic. Enjoy life and health and youth while you've got it because all too soon it's

lost forever. He saw the doubt and perplexity, the struggle to be serious in my young eyes. He smiled: we all believe in our own immortality and think it inconceivable that the entire universe peopled by our consciousness, filled and fluid with our passions, our loves and hates, will one day vanish utterly and we will be just one of a billion memories in the minds of other people. He turned to stare at a far cloud: and what they will do with those memories, what they will become, grow into, or ^{how} be dissipated into nothingness. I wasn't born old, you know: I felt the same burgeoning strength as you, the same invincibility, shared the same adventures. But time wears on, and perspectives change, and you're not the same person as when you were younger. O sure, there's a central core of ideals like what I've tried to teach you all your short life that can remain constant, but your expectations shift, your priorities vary, you respond in different ways as experience teaches you its bitter lessons. I saw his eyes smiling and pleading, sensing there wasn't much time, and all too aware of the poverty of language. I was already taller than he, he was a small man, handsome, lean, but I had seen him ravaged by ulcers and two heart attacks, and his hair had gone white. In that oxygen tent his beard started to grow and he looked like a sleeping patriarch, a father of a thousand generations. He had little lyricism in his soul, but great poetry and humor. And love. So let it be with me. And remember never to be afraid to love. Love is the greatest experience a man can have. I have never loved anyone with the same intensity as I loved you. ^{You} You know my desire for a brother, then a son: I was fifty years old when you were born. That's too old. I'm on the way out and I won't see you develop into whatever it is you want to be. I love you, though you're too young for me to know what you are, or what you will become. I love you on pure faith: maybe that's the purest love, untainted by pride. Maybe it's better I won't be around: you might hear a different drummer taking you onto a path I cannot understand. There would be a sundering then, and I couldn't stand that. I tried to deny, but knew

in my heart that what he said was likely, ~~if history holds any lessons of merit.~~

He cheered me: but there would always follow the joy of reconciliation. But don't be afraid to love and give yourself completely to love. It's painful when it doesn't work out, but there is such joy if... He looked out at the playground, the children on the swings and monkey bars, the brick elementary school. And I felt a swelling sadness, a constriction reaching to the very center of my body, that has since never left me, never left the back of my mind, never left my soul in peace. It asserts itself each time I walk the streets and sing one of the old tunes that were his favorites, the ones we sang together in the car, harmonizing, or walking down the village sidewalk: or when I see glitter in the city like the glitter of Vegas, or a woman, strutting, a tall chorine, painted and curled and classy, but alluring to a past generation: or when I walk alone in the woods and weigh a fallen limb in my hand, and remember how I released my stony rage at his death in one frenzy of remorse and grief, cracking limbs with my bare hands, weeping, blinded by tears, calling Why Why Why. Or when I think of her grown fat, lonely, penitent: be good to your mother, always respect her, and try to forget our fights and the things we said about each other. It wasn't right to involve you kids and that error and weakness will always haunt me. But you must love your mother. I hate men who abandon their mothers when they go out into the world. Remember that: that; that: that: that: that... Sin. One sin only: betrayal of love. Her eyes of fifteen years opened wide beside me, then grew heavy with passion. She panted and my heart thrilled. Could this be? So young. So willing. Her legs opened, she put her hand on mine and drew it to her panties, wanted my finger inside her, then more. A virgin, yet harmonic with the same vibrations that thrilled my soul: we two pulsing in the growing ^{dusk} ~~dark~~ alive with the nearness of each other. Too much then, too much nearness, too many hassles. She's runaway, again. Tell me if you know where she is. You know she's under age. I can get you into a lot of trouble. I don't know. I don't know. They'd

ruin everything with their anger, resentment, threats^s and then, when every-
 thing collapsed in a smoking shambles, they'd smile smugly with their I-told-
 you-so faces and revel in their victory. If she should call you have her come
 home. She lay next to me, rewarding me with her naked body. Can't remember
 her nipples or the shape of her labia: just her mouth and eyes. Strange: so
 many times I went down on her, so many times I caressed her nipples between
 my fingers. Yet our weeping sticks in my mind: I'm a pawn and too young and
 you use me to strike back at your parents. God knows they deserve it: the
 blind idiots. But understand me, understand my own search, understand my own
 terrors and weakness. I fell out of love and we parted, ~~bitter~~^{bitter}. To this day.
 I can lie to one I don't love, I can be cunning, even deadly, but not to my
 love. Her eyes, brown, sparkling, yet intense with concern: her face and
 form Botticelli's Primavera. Poetry crawls mute, and limping art droops its
 shamefaced visage when her living presence fills me. Like you, Selene, yet
 more so, a warm embodiment of your cold silver, purveyor of passions unknown
 to immortals. She shares my fear of death and aging, the drooping of the body,
 the loss of fluids, drying, wrinkling. I am your toy, I am her life, her
 complement. You inspire me, she creates me, molds me, overwhelms me. Jealous
 goddess, dare not strike her for her human love or I will shrivel your glaring
 globe with invective and incantation. Then see the light of lunacy shine
 through the bitter smoke and ash of your ruins. All poetry, all high lyrical
 apprehension, crushed and forever extinguished. But no: no jealous goddess.
 You sent her to me in dappled silver wings, made her open to me her life and
 heart, made me weak and trembling as a kitten. Cat's-eyes in alleylight: her
 dark eyes glowing, she crawls up my naked supine body, her buttocks sleek and
 firm, her breasts lightly skimming my chest. Her tongue dances flicking over
 my body, lingering on my nipples, nipples as sensitive and lusty as a woman's.
 She knows. She knows how to please a man, she knows how to enthrall him with
 impending orgasm, tease him, make him linger on the brink, make his balls

swell and churn beneath her floating fingertips: she knows. And then with her soft, moist tongue, skillful and darting, or the wetness of her cunt, she squeezes my cock, drains it of sperm, makes my skin crawl with passion and release, makes me shoot hard, voluminous, spurt after spurt, my eyes roll upwards and I lay paralyzied with satisfaction for an eternity. And all the poet's fine phrases, and all the limpid music of harps and violins, fade into the abstract nothingness of mere formality and resonance before the humid reality of her jeweled soul. What we have here, however, is an example of sentimental purple prose at its most nauseating. You will note, travelling wearily from paragraph to paragraph, the author's attempt at fluid rhythms that violate the rule of terseness generally accepted for modern novels, rhythms that break wave upon wave into the reader's consciousness, as monotonous and irksome as the sea. And again we can almost pity the author's efforts to dazzle his readers with stark visions of epic proportions when after all we live in a century that has killed the epic and laid it to rest. Underneath the flamboyant exterior of pseudo-modern construction beats the heart of a sentimentalist and pornographer, not detached but confusedly present in every word; not austere, but weepy and nauseating; not avant-garde, but slinking and subversive. So I left his class as soon as the bell rang, hungry, deploring his callousness, remembering how he had spoken when she had joined me one day: there will be no more hand-holding and other displays of affection, surreptitious or not, in my class because I find them disruptive and altogether out of place. Stone, the litterateur, Stone, the Shakespearean, Stone, the alchemist, transmuting life into death, Stone, the Immortal, the effigy of all dead thoughts on living legs, Mr. Stone. Society's child: bald, arrogant, empty, loveless. What happened to the primordial semen, the instinctive erectile response to rut-smells, the iron thighs and hard-heaving chest? I, a primitive savage in this technocracy bereft of god and hope and reverence. And the desert birds circled the pale sky, a weakening goat staggering beneath them, victim of out-

rage and the merciless sun. He sat on an outcropping of rock watching the birds and imagining the distant goat, far from his swollen wife and their village. For months have those dreams tormented me, lord, months of fitful sleep and mocking faces. And I turn to her in the night and she is awake, smiling with wild eyes. I hold her and we love, but she is voracious, clutching and screaming and choking on her own passion. And I am brutal and relentless, chained by bonds of sultry flesh, held captive by her locked legs and lustful arms. Then there is peace and deep slumber, yet always a hidden voice of doom, of regret, of admonition. Make me privy to your ways, lord: I have dragged myself these many miles out into the desert to be far from the noise and distractions of my village, to flee from her knowing, wanton eyes, so that I may perhaps learn her secret. She knows something, lord, which she cannot share: inarticulate, satisfying, tinged with grief and great rejoicing, her secret lies sullen in the hermitage of her breast. I am a goddess, she whispered to me one sweet night after caressing her fertile womb, and you are my god, the lord of hosts. ^{Not} ~~Not~~ blasphemy: the sparkle in her eye belied that, affirmed the absolute truth of her lips. Lord, I would know whereof she speaks that I may rejoice and suffer with her. And the hot hours passed until the desert moon burst through the purple sky and mountains and he saw within the bloated silver orb a wan foetus, bent and prayerful, with eyes both wise and cunning. And he smiled, rising from the ancient rock and trudged the many miles back to his village, exultant. As I smiled, amidst uncertainty, amidst terror, amidst the uncounted woes of warfare and rebellion. Nathan, our prophet, sits under the tamarac tree with his notebook, stares at the sky, mumbles to passing birds, then writes. No one's seen his writing: a chronicle of these terrible times, a diatribe against me, a phillipic against the feds, what? I wonder. He's so shy, head always averted from direct eye contact, but he snarls a lot under his breath. He comes to me late at night, after the cohort commanders have left and kind of sulks by the door until I ask him in. Not

very bold for a prophet, ~~hardly ballsy like his Biblical counterpart, David's~~
~~conscience. But in his own way he's my conscience~~

So I offer him some club soda and we sit and talk, with him always apologizing for keeping me awake and I always having to tell him it doesn't matter, that it's more important that I pick his brain. He's flattered by that, yet humbled, embarrassed a little I think, and he kind of nods, looking at his knees or a wayward hangnail. Then he tells me what troubles him about our campaign, or about maintaining the purity of our cause in the face of victory, or about strengthening morale in the worrisome hours of defeat. His thin face and fragile-boned body are alive with the wellspring of his ruminations, tremulous and intense. His hair is dark, thin, and wild, and his sparse beard sticks straight out from his jaw, making him look more like an asylum inmate than a prophet. I smile in the lantern light, reclining, relaxed: not at him, but filled with the joy and hope his words contain like hidden kernels that must first be pried with much care from their shells. Even at his most sullen, he can sputter and wheeze about a minor controversy in which he always finds some grand underlying principle and still spark my soul because ^{of} his intense concern about what's happening, about even the most minor details of the struggle, gives our romantic, idealistic, often tragic and sublime venture a reality and tangibility that is refreshing and revitalizing. And he inevitably ends his discussion with some remark about the establishment of a synagogue or my joining him for private services out at his little ark of covenant in the woods. He ^{is} ~~was~~ a devout Jew, fascinated by Jewish ritual and mysticism, but was not treated well by his brethren. Most allowed their worldliness to mute their sense of holy indignation at repression, while the others were so other-worldly that they disregarded all fluid and pulsing life beyond their prayer shawls and prayer books. And he wants me to join him, to return to the fold, the fold that censured him, cast him from them, made a mockery of his zeal for justice and righteousness. I always rebuke him by asking how I

can be any more of a Jew than by struggling to free my people from their earthly chains and return them to the path of righteousness as shown to me by my intuitive contact with my God: surely this endeavor is far more significant than a ritual recitation or chant. But still he persists, sullenly, futilely, and then withdraws, assured for the millionth time that I will when the revolution has been successful and a new social order has been established on our shores. My mentor and my caution: he finds modest praise for me when I'm in the throes of uncertainty or plagued with guilt about a series of reverses or a particularly tragic strategic error: and he always bears a needle with which to burst my balloon when I'm smug and spry and dangerously overconfident. Sometimes we are Akiba and Bar Kochba, he and I; other times we're Abbot and Costello. But I cherish the man, and when this is all over I'll join him in the brightest, most elaborate synagogue, with a Torah like ~~these~~^{one} of my childhood, draped in embroidered velvet and decorated with jingling silver ornaments and a shiny breastplate of jewels and I'll mumble the prayers with him all day long, and fast, and watch him weep and we'll put our arms around each other and jing out the Sh'ma, long and lustily, maybe we'll throw in some bawdy winks at the women and give that joyous musical phrase a gay, obscene lilt which is all it lacks to make it perfect, an obscene lilt full of red blood and life. And when that crazy Nathan leaves his tent, I watch as the lantern light lingers and imagine him deep in thought. My child sleeps by my naked arm and I hear his short young breaths and little body-snores. He wondered how I could love him: I think I shamed him with my answer. I didn't mean to. He doesn't deserve to be hurt or made to feel small: it's his boyish curiosity, the openness of his face, he can't keep a doubt or query from flashing like a meteor from his eyes or booming out from between his lips. He doesn't mean to say the wrong thing: he's just like a child, that's all, questioning everything all the time. Sometimes I see that soldier's face again, hovering over mine, blotting out the sun, and his question seems valid. I'm not pretty, but I'm

like a child: my eyes too big and innocent, my body too small and thin, a little girl's body. I was pedophiliac lust for him, a symptom of his uncertain masculinity. Nothing I can flatter myself about. His horrible hands: I wanted the first time to be ideal, like all women, with flowers and rases and background music and a loving man. It rarely works out that way I'm told: sometimes rape, but mostly mediocrity, furtiveness, frustration: a teenager, pimply and panting, in the back of a car or a parent's stolen bedroom, or a stockbroker, hurriedly, his mind on tomorrow's market. In a way I'm luckier than most: it was a stark horror and is emblazoned as such in my mind. It's not a sterile lifetime of infinite boredom and inanity. That I couldn't stand. And there's my beautiful child. I don't see his face in him at all, just mine: a recompense, a gift from God to atone for the sins of the father. But I haven't had a man since then, and my body lusts for a man on moon-drenched humid nights like this. He must come upon me softly and take away the pain of thought, still the shivered rancour that scars my soul. They commiserated when I was found wandering, hysterical, tearing the air before me like invisible veils that blocked my flight. Their soft women's eyes wept with me, and some with glinting bitterness stared coldly out into the night, their breasts heaving. I was so frightened and alone and some with strange, amazed eyes found themselves seduced by me, touched intimately, thrilled by the gentle tonguing I had been denied. Their thin, tentative fingers hovering around my nipples, brushing against them lightly, swelling them, making them cherry-bright and crinkly. I see his shadow in the tent: he rises, stretches, meditates: he shoulders the anguish and terror of us all. I remember him at the storming of the chateau: like a classic warrior, thick, muscular, enduring. He tossed feds around like straws in the wind, I had never seen such majestic fury. When his guns gave out, he fought with the primitive blade and club. Then he was most enthralling: near naked, his fine body shining with dirt and sweat, he battered the last defenders of the chateau with that heavy piece of pipe, like

Samson smiting the Philistines. And we followed after, wild with his bloodlust, conquering and overcoming their stronghold, chasing them clear out of the mountain fastnesses. We dragged ourselves up through rubble where he leaped, and charged through the furrow of blanched bodies he left before us. And when victory was complete he danced naked and exultant, and he and she and some wild~~o~~thers, women beautiful as Amazons, made love all night and the armies rejoiced and there were many wh~~i~~spered words of love and argasms and sheer exultation. Even my baby ran through the couples, naked and shouting. And I stared at the constellation Orion gleaming crisp in the chill night and the faceless giant seemed to smile and rejoice with us. And now he paces in his tent, boyish, cunning, bewildered~~d~~ as I am by this world of contradictions and absurdities. I would lie by him, comfort him in his dark nights, but he fears to approach, fears that because of my rape I will lay on all men's shoulders my grief and hatred. I did for a long time: ages of loneliness and shame. But no more: time has passed and memories fade and I have found much love with my child. O if only he'd have me, take me on a sultry night like this, a moon-drenched night, I'll have to speak to him and assure him first it would be all right. Yes, tomorrow, tomorrow I'll go in to him and offer myself and lay once at least in my life with my chosen man, my chosen lover, and if he doesn't love me in return, if he just wonders at me and thrills to thrill me for a stolen hour, then, yes, that is perfect too, that too is beautiful and holy. She pirouettes before me, Aphrodite of the ancients, Aphrodite Kallipygos the lustful wench, look how she cavorts, how her eyes wink at me, her breasts sway full and enticing. Such power, these conjured mists he commands. O she's magnificence: she makes my greybeard's life of learning anemic and pale in contrast to her glowing vitality. My old loins haven't felt such surging lust since my youth. My you^ht~~h~~ age, there's the fetter: for what is youth but surge and swe~~l~~l and heady trembling, the body's systolic paean to life. We can pain~~t~~ and dye and drape but all to no avail. Such efforts stand

withered and obscene, like old naked men in the light of day. God, I want to touch her. She bends as if she doesn't see me, adjusts her sandal, her long, sensuous legs revealed emerging from her tunic: she sees me looking, the wench, she's peeking at me, smiling, yes, I will take her to my bed, O not the real goddess I know that but her form her illusion it is more than enough I will tell her yes, yes, now, I have chosen. And he lurks in a shaded corner watching the play of passions ^{on} in the old warlock's face, his cat's eyes intense, pitying. He knows he has conquered, the shrill presence of lust and youth have vanquished his impotence. And he bids the form materialize. I will grant you a body worthy of hers, ^R worthy to worship her with lust, and loins stiff and powerful, young again. Thus may you spend an eternity in carnal lust with the epitome of feminine allure, Aphrodite the All-Consuming. And he prudently, considerately withdrew from the warlock's ornate bedchamber, leaving the now-young wizard to wallow and frolic. To retain these visions, I know a billion others flit past, skimming the surface of my mind, a wing-tip or beak or bubbled note may brush my conscious lights but then it's gone: and waves of stranger symbols, visions militant and sere or scintillating. To stop time and hold space still and plunge my mortal hand into the dripping gore of my mind and drag out the central primitive vision struggling and wailing: all the others would be revealed, could be interpreted. The mother roach: they swarmed foul and daring over the kitchen walls, under the floors, over the whole building. Turn on a light and they scattered like thieves and my fists and feet slapped the walls, smak, smak, they died brutally, instantly squashed but just a few, such a paltry few. And I dreamed of the mother roach, big as a watermelon, squatting in a hidden recess behind ^a the basement wall, whelping her young by the thousands bidding them go forth and forage and swarm and multiply. We've reached an understanding with the bastards: they can have the kitchen and bathroom as long as they leave the living room and bedroom alone. You can't do anything else. They've been around for millions of years,

since before the dinosaurs. We're gonna stop 'em? The sanctity of life, the Indian guru pontificated, allows for no exceptions: we are all links in ^{the} great chain of creation: we are all one: Aum. Hell. Smak...Smak...Smak... And I crawled through the walls, ratsized, armed with a swatch-needle and hunted the mother roach. ^{Dam} ~~Dam~~ the source, stem the tide. Dam the source, stem the tide. Nobody believed in the bogey behind the invasions: futile, they cried, futile and mad. So I crawled rat-sized through the walls, assaulted by the stench of decay, organic bits of rot and dead mouse and fertile bacteria proliferating throughout the building, sights and smells lost to the man-statured ~~but~~ stark and relentless to the rat-sized man, the shrunken mobile will. Rivers of water from ancient pipes rusted and worn, plaster and moist scum falling with each tread of a hidden giant's foot, pale blind mites and winged nibs unknown to science, born in darkness eternal, hunting food with senses inconceivable to man. And at last I battled my way to the basement, scurrying and sliding, fending off glow-eyed rats with my needle and followed a huge train of roaches, each lugging a morsel of moldy garbage into a den black and silent as a tomb. There she lay: chewing, whelping, shitting: immensely fat, her legs shrunken ^K and useless for her bulk, her antennae large, furry, domineering. And before she could telepathically deploy her army against me, I jumped on her back, ~~she clicked out a pained protest~~ and skewered her brain with my needle. Her exoskeleton popped and slimy ooze sprayed me and her wondering newly-hatched brood. Then she was dead. And the roaches, confused, disoriented, fled from the walls, fled from the kitchens that had been their bulwark for decades, deserted their conquered territory in chagrin, and in a massive lemming-like exodus ^{lead} ~~went~~ along a great Hudson rat-hole and drowned themselves in the ^S sea. And I returned triumphant, exultant, wiser than before, and assumed man-size again and lived in peace in my own apartment, eating my own food, meditating on the travesty of worship we call God. Fantasy: perhaps therein lies man's congress with divinity. The weird and beautiful phantoms

that float upon our poet minds, or the curdled, snarling monsters, the stuff of nightmare: what ^{energy} ~~energy~~ glows through those visions, what quingessential light, primitive, searing. Woe to those who would renounce their random visitations, who spurn their eerie beauty, who fail to profit from that divine aflatus. At night, under alleylight, ^u ~~u~~nder the glare of impotent tiny moons, I think of the sterile ones, the ones we struggle to redeem, the ones who rest complacent amidst martyrdom and carnage, the ones who are momentum, inertia, non-entities, those who would be left alone, the orgasmless virgins awash like brittle shells on the mighty tide of life, millions of them, flatulent, ~~y~~ielding, mistakes of evolution, throwbacks to the inorganic age, rocks and stones. Some are condemned to feel a sense of mission, I told her ^{on} ~~in~~ that spring night so very warm, so very somber. She looked at me, the mysterious stranger, with large wondering eyes: some feel the mind's reproach to the pit of their guts. So high our dreams shimmer, so far our minds wander, over freedoms unknown to mortals, over omnipotence that is ^e ~~cr~~edited only to a god. And some of us follow those dreams, believe in their plausibility and are tormented by the sordid reality around us. Such as us are fools, really, impossible fools. Most disperse to visions and madness, howling at the moon, useless to the race of common men. Others are blessed with the acumen ^{to} ~~to~~ survive in the real world and make lives, solitary and pure, for themselves. And they alone die happy. And the last group are those who wish to spread the vision add the dream to blockheads; who, like myself, will die fighting for the salvation of the uninitiated and unworthy. We are fools, ~~but~~ we cherish our grander moments, like this stolen spring night with you in my arms, and it all is somehow made worthwhile. But we know we're doomed, fated to tragedy: torment and death for ourselves, hopelessness for our high dreams. Then why? Because for us the struggle to actualize our ideals is as necessary as air and water: without that commitment we are shells, automatons, often depressed, even suicidal. And we broke down his door that summer morning while the little sparrows buried themselves

bringing food to their voracious young: his face purple, the lips distended, his eyes bulging: we cut him down, nauseous, incredulous ^{over} ~~about~~ the ~~absurd~~ angle of his snapped neck. And we cursed at the gods and felt deep guilt within our souls, wondering what each of us might have said to prevent this. ~~and~~

The rope was new, he was always neat and always tried to keep his appearance fresh and clean and he put us to shame with our filth and ^{people. So the rope fits in} ~~we~~ cut him down and ^{except for the bloody pant around the noose and} laid him on the couch. I feel the weight of the night: I feel closed in, oppressed, impotent. Lives glance the peripheries of our lives a thousand times and we're still too weak to reach out and grasp: and then they're gone, and I'm here alone, dreaming of might-have-been tomorrows, yet certain of graceless ~~yesterday~~s, processional and austere. I, like you, wish to speak to the night and have her whisper incredible sonnets to me, and fill me with the gore of righteousness: but my night is still, and the stars sweep the fulsome heavens in ice and flame, relentless, intractable, forbidding. And I bent my head and looked away, wishing for something to say: that Selene is liberal as a thunderstorm if you can embrace the lightning. But my lips didn't move and he stared serenely out of the window: there's peace in resignation. I acquiesce. At last I can confess that all of this is beyond me, that I am unsuited to unravelling life's mysteries. I am surrounded by heroic questers and I'm not one of them. You're wrong-- Let me finish. I see my limitations and I can accept them. Now I must go where they lead me. And he left us months ago and we didn't hear more of him until that night and that note. And the cops didn't even call in forensic, just an ambulance to bring the dead black to the morgue and they scooped up his needle and stared at the wall: Pain, my God I see why: it trailed off in a scrawled strake pointing to his hand, his dead black hand. Final defiance, that, or a moment of poetry: revelation or rebellion in the last instant of life, the instant when the difference between life and death is felt, absorbed through pores closed all through life and now open first that instant, that one final swirling instant. And ^{my} ~~the~~ death:

what. So often faced, apparent final moments, then a new lease. I fear it
 will pounce on me from behind, I won't look it in the eyes, it will just over-
 whelm me, inglorious, sudden. The traitor foe: Nathan warned me. He will
 come in the night and you will be in the fullness of your sins. Beware the
 silent stiletto... Maybe. One way likely as any other. Don't think: don't:
 this way madness lies. I can't see you. But why? Too many hassles. You
 use me to get away from your parents. I'm not sure you really love me or
 understand my needs. How can you say that? I love you with all my heart:
 I run to you when darkness folds me up and cracks me and I can't stand it
 anymore. I run to you when my own self is insufficient. How can you doubt
 that love. That love is smothering mine. Tell me how and I'll change: I'll
 act differently, I'll give you more... You've given me all. Yes: I have.
 That Christmas night we had the house to ourselves and we made love and I bled
 all over the sheets: you were my first and there was music in that moment for
 me. And lights and poetry for me. Can you forget so soon? In later years I
 will recall with pain and poetry. But now... I am breaking apart: you are
 my sustenance. Renounce me, or you will grow as weak as I. Never: never.
 You must. Never: if you will abandon me, the guilt will rest on your shoulders.
 You'll not have my consent. And she rode off crying, ashamed, on the bike
 she loaned me. I walked and walked and walked. That road stretched out to
 eternity, I'm still on it. Where is she? Where is she? The fall of man:
 my original sin for which I will weep and be penitent until my days of sand
 and stone are dissolved. Those nights we retreated from the world into our
 bodies, the pleasure of our bodies, the truths and whispers and measures of
 our bodies: lost we were in the treasures of our bodies. She sighed in my
 arms and curled her questing mouth to my face and whispered her love. And
 I silently pressed her so soft body with my weighty arms, the rockness of my
 arms squeezing, caressing her yielding flesh. Slim and beautiful, her breasts
 small firm and young, young she was, and I betrayed her. I am a bitter memory

to her, a reproach against all men, a traitor. I am in the fullness of my sin on this dark night: away, away from myself, my thoughts must turn to metaphor and symbol, poetry: an exile from myself. Homeless: lost among the tribes of humanity: on nonnight is there a place set for me, a respite offered me from sheer human fullness, bounty and joy. An outlaw, I roam the face of the earth, the dark places, the bitter wastes and fleshpots brimming with audacious slaughter and vile dreams. They sat in the warehouse, tall, black, their eyes yellowed with the night. And why did you want to see me? I wanted to confront you, eye to eye: I wanted to look into the face of my assassin. Who you calling an assassin? I wouldn't waste my time killing you. Your white dreamers will be wiped out soon enough: I won't need to soil my hands. They will make it very profitable for you to kill me. Who? The man. Mann, you're off the wall: we don't work for no feds. White teeth grinning, affected nonchalance, they sweated in that summer heat, sunglasses and berets, nodding contemptuous of me. I've come here this once to make myself known to you and then to leave you forever. You've been offered a place with us, you and your people: I knew you'd refuse. Our goals are incompatible. We are visionaries who have seen the best and have tasted its shallow bitterness: we seek a new world order, a world of ideals and beauty. You mock us: the pie is fine with you; you just want a bigger slice. I understand you in a way you will never understand me. You seek to turn your people against me by denigrating our cause as an irrelevant white power struggle, a doomed cause, a cause without substance for the poor and exploited. You know you lie, and your people know it. They flock to me, hundreds each day, they flee from your loud mindless militance, your noise, your deceptions, your Realpolitik. You hate me and my followers: soon they'll approach you with money, with offers of wealth far beyond your dreams, and you'll do their bidding. I came here tonight to tell you that I know. Man, you're crazy. Crazy: and they faded into the darkness, faded into their arsenals and tenements and heroin vaults. Betrayal. I see. I see, yet there is nothing

I can do to prevent it: I am a Moon-child, spun into an irreversible orbit,
 propelled by winds of necessity: I cannot return to the obscurity of simplicity.
 And the crucible smoked in the high priest's hands: stench and fummy backwash
 of infernal regions. The immodest priest gazed into the fire and bubbles and
 the mystic metal softened, liquified, twialed about the rotundity of the crucible,
 sliding like quicksilver, slowed, gelled, coagulated into the likeness of a
 demon, glowed bitter-bright red, cooled, The metal effigy, incantation-spawned,
 grinned up at the high priest who caressed it lovingly. Its fanged grin, broad
 flat nose and evil staring eyes looking up ~~from~~ beneath thick~~x~~-ridged brows,
 seemed to imply foreknowledge of some terrible jest. It had horns and its
 head sprouted directly ~~from~~ its shoulders, neckless: robed like a priest, its
 serpentine ~~h~~ether parts peeked out from the metal hem of its garments. Its
 hair was long and flowing like a Chinese dervish and it bore in its right hand
 a sacramental T-square, its significance unknown th the immodest priest. Out
 of the simple lump you formed yourself; aided by the spurt of my incantatory
 genius. Without my deskre, my mystic will, you would have remained but a
 lump of rock, a softness of ore, useless. I have cammanded you to reveal your-
 self to me so that I may enlist your aid in my gangerous enterprise. Pazuzu,
 I command you to accomplish my bidding that I may immortalize ^{your} ~~you~~ demonic
 spirit within the flesh of my body. He will be dead soon, the frail son of
 god, the final medicinal draught has entered his body and will ^expel his soul
 to the other world. Then she will follow: beautiful, arrogant, unapproachable,
 she who spurned me will follow, my blade at her naked breast. O the joy of
 it. I will be found deep within the dark tomb, her dead body slave to my lust:
 then I will be sanctified by ritual execution, I will pass through ~~the~~ seven
 gates and will die, be reborn into flesh of clay, and emerge miraculous and
 immortal, the incarn~~a~~tion of Pazuzu. He turned the leaden demon in his hand;
 the metal eyes still glowed red. Then I will know all: the souls of stars,
 the dark hours of man's inner soul, the myriad perversions man was ^mneant to
 wallow in and their infinite joys. And the final simplicity of all perverse

and bestial, the simplicity beneath the symbols and the metaphors, the orgasm of the universe, the simple orgasm of being. He waved his crystal rod in violent circles: open for me the aquamarine gate, the gate of natal sin: open for me the beryl gate, the gate of sin enshrined: open for me the emerald gate, the gate of arcane incantation: open for me the ruby gate, the gate of submission to torment: open for me the diamond gate, the gate of torment inflicted: open for me the amethyst gate, the gate of godhead devoured: open for me the golden gate, the gate of life everlasting. And the raucous laughter of the high priest echoed throughout the porphyry halls of the Pharaoh, and the young dying monarch trembled beneath his linen sheets and looked imploringly at his beautiful queen whose eyes were dark and full of knowledge and her ^Nhand grew cold in his.

My physician, shepherd of my soul: his sick eyes were wide and bulging, the muscles of his throat began to constrict. Nameless fears assault me, my queen. Dare I suggest he has violated the highest laws of the gods, that he has sown my body with this wasting illness, that he mocks my divinity in the secret chambers of his holy precincts? Listen to the hyena laughing, shattering the night with his maniac growls. I am betrayed, my queen. You are betrayed, my lord. The councillors crouched terrified in Pharaoh's chamber, awaiting the manifestation of his divinity. In rage he drew himself up on his couch, his puniness, his fine-boned frailness, and the couch was soaked in sweat and he railed at the gods: peace, I demand peace and retribution, I your most holy son will be avenged on my foe: O the bitter fool I've been, the spawn for jest, the chariot of iniquity. Let my soul scream: he struggles from the couch, stumbling, wild, his queen and councillors rush to restrain him: Let my outrage fill these halls like his laughter. But he fell awash with cold sweat and died in the arms of his shaven councillors, his hand on his queen's naked thigh. God the night swells humid and oppressive, a pharaoh's throat choked amidst rage: why these wayward passions, these lusts and nerves that tingle us from one deceit to another? They do not feel in purity, they do not

thrill with the joyous body's release, the pleasure of orgasm. No, no they
sulk in dark holes, spinning webs of death, ~~angry~~^{angry}, resentful, brooding like
a moonless night pendant over the sea. And the phantom Hallel ~~rests~~^{rests} on a cliff
overlooking that sea, hair streaming in the salt wind, his body clothed in
a silky ~~chiton~~^{spane}, ~~gossamer~~^{gossamer}: he caresses the muscles of his thighs and
his taut biceps: I see him and hear his soft, stirring voice. The waves of
night break noisily against the mossy boulders below, swallowing his words
but not his robust smile and large joyous eyes. He looks out to sea, looks
far out to sea, as if he would dissipate the gloom of night ~~with~~^{with} his searing
glance. But it is void: the dark thunderous sky melts into the thrashing sea
and Hallel rests, awaiting the rain and the lightning and the thunder to come,
tremble, and pass over into other darker nights. See, see, there, in the flash
of lightning he bears my face, strange though and serene: my face. My face
though another's more ancient, swelled with the fullness of centuries, eons:
ancient as the cliffs and the sea. And he shall bear upon his countenance
a sign: and like Cain, all the peoples of the earth shall know him^{him}. The old
prophet stumbles blindly in the desert waste, shrivelled by the relentless sun.
And he shall bear upon his countenance the mark of the Messiah, the mark of
God, wild as the moon. Scorched into his face the brand of the Almighty: I
see him, shrouded in centuries, I see the brand, I see the moon-shaped brand,
crater of the flesh. He stumbles: I have sinned and am smitten with the madness
of your visions. I thought before I could see, but I stumbled blind and bitter.
Your madness cured me, Your divine madness. Ha! Ha! I see him, I see him
floating in the sun, I see him lonely in a massive shell, twisting and tormented
in sleep, alone, a warrior, a poet, a sinner, but mostly a sacrificial victim.
Blessed be thee, O Lord, my God, who has sanctified me with this vision. The
prophet, warped with frenzy, sinks from his knees face down into the dust.
So we slipped into a basement on the Heights, a tenement bombed out and still
smoking, where we heard there might be a subteranean clique of feds and saboteurs.
Just a few noises and lights spotted in the night. But when we got there we

hung breathless from rafters and airshafts, our guns levelled, and stared into the terrified eyes of Jews huddling together in the basement where they had set up a small synagogue, with a Torah rescued from the flames of their temple, a few ornaments and a small oil lamp burning: the eternal. Shit, they were terrified by our suddenness, women and children and old folk, and the few stalwart men shielded the rest with their own bodies. He was with us that night and, after looking the worshippers over for any tricks, he seemed amused, smiled and dropped from the ceiling onto the floor like a lithe monkey, shouldered his rifle and stretched out his hand in greeting. Shalom, he said, just like that, and the Jews smiled nervously, realized he, too, was a Jew, and welcomed us among them. Man, they were relieved: they thought they were to be killed, whether we were feds or rebels. The Jews, they said, always get killed no matter who finds them. He asked for permission to look at the Torah, and of course they let him, he hadn't seen one since the ancient days, he said, when he was a kid in Sabbath school, a drop-out in second grade. He told me how they took him once down into a basement chapel and showed all the children one of the spare Torahs with the breastplate and ornaments and silver stylus. With bells, he said. And the scrolls were the finest vellum and all written by hand. And so there they were in the light of the flickering oil lamp, a Rembrandt tableau, the lost Jew returned, gazing with the reverent others upon the book of laws. The man of war, with bloodied hands, staring at the strange Hebrew characters inked with devotion. ~~an~~We saw they were hungry and sent out a scouting party to bring back provisions. Wine, he said, especially wine and bread. And then he left for headquarters and left a few of us to stay with them at least for a while to protect them. The old rabbi thanked him with tears in his eyes, and he called the old man father and left through the basement ceiling and out like a swift rat into the danger of the night-time streets. And when the next day a party of feds burst in to shoot the Jews up, we were there to surprise them and I never enjoyed demolishing a gang

of those armbanded cutthroats more than that day, with that heavy Torah safely hidden in the ma^Keshift Ark. You under^ustand, of course, the fed captain said to the rich man as he gobbled down his dinner, that the times are all out of joint. He dribbled and snorted while he ate, but didn't mind, and enjoyed the perplexed helplessness on the face of his host. Until the rebellion I was just a cop on the beat, never got much education, never expected much more than an early retirement. Now, of course, all that's changed. I never would have dreamed that a man as important as you would invite me to his home for a great feed like this: not then, anyway. But now the national troops are kind of distant from all the trouble, and mostly seditious themselves and its up to us few who nursed the armories and remained loyal to protect the true citizens, the worthy citizens, you men of substance and enterprize, from being robbed and plundered by those bastard hooligans. He gobbled more food, but the host smiled ingratiatingly and passed him another plateful. The hostess, sleek, young, beautiful, yet showing the cares of the past months in little lines around her eyes and mouth, barely hidden beneath a misty fluttering of fine powder, refilled the wine glasses and passed out into the kitchen, disgusted by the gross captain and her fawning husband. The captain followed her out with lustful eyes. Yeah, ~~these~~ bastards will steal the gold out of your teeth. They're tricky and talented and filled with their crazy drugs and wild ideas. Nothing but bums and assassins. The host stared uncomfortably into his plate. But there are so few of us around, and so many of you respectable citizens who need protecting. Now I'm not a man to mince words. I'm not sophisticated enough to make elaborate hints, ~~flapdoodle flirtations~~. These crisis times make us cut the crap. Now, it's the policy of all of us military leaders to make sure that our special patrons receive special protection. And special efforts cost money and other favors, as you might well guess. Now, I've always had a personal liking for you and have considered you a special friend of me and the boys... Good, good, you're a businessman, I knew you'd see it my way.

He wiped his mouth and obese chin with the fine linen, leaving it smeared and spotted. He belched. Excuse me. All this fine food. Well. Now, if you could just leave me and your pretty wife alone for a couple of hours, I'll be on my way. The host's jaw dropped and his eyes widened. I've got a lot of work to do hunting those rebel-rats. They heard a glass fall and shatter in the kitchen. No one moved. Well? The host, the businessman, the respected citizen, quietly folded his napkin, rose, and went out the door. It slammed behind him. He took me for his lover with his oil-d beard and fine gold goblets. He prided himself on his fat, his breasts pendulous like a woman's, his skin oily from the richness of his diet. He made me come to him on my knees, sinking into cushions of Tyrean velvet, with my head bent forward and my eyes averted. I should admire his wealth and the wretched sloth it bred in him that he need never labor in the healthy air of the fields or hunt the wild pig in the crazy mountains. He has exotic animals, rare and costly, mutilated and obscure parts made into delicate pastries: bird tongues and crocodile tails and mandrill snouts. And then he wanted me to betray you, and I almost spit in his lecherous eye. I was so disgusted and enraged. Our God is a hard taskmaster: I played the part of the whore seductress and told him the lie of your sacred locks and he grinned like an old fox scenting a baby rabbit lost from its nest. I wanted to leave but he made me stay and soon his hands were all over me and he tore off my veils and I wanted to vomit but I had to play my part because the Lord demands it of me and he took me I had to climb on top of him he's too fat to do anything but lay down on his back and he came in a few seconds and I couldn't help but weep in anger and humiliation but he thought my tears were tears of pleasure and he fell asleep snoring with a smug smile on his obscene face. O why does your God ask so much? Why must we sacrifice our honor and our lives to destroy the Philistines? Let Him open a cloud and rain lightning upon the wicked people, like the cities of the plain, and let Him consume them with fire. I was ashamed of my body that night for the first time in my life. I felt sinful and obscene, and ~~washed~~ ^{washed} his wretched seed out of me

as soon as I returned to my quarters. I'd sooner duuche with diarrhea than share that fat man's bed again. O God, where were you with your body of iron, your giant limbs and gentle eyes, my love, my dearest love, why must you be sacrificed for a rebellious and contentious race, a race of warriors who would turn paradise into an armed camp with their squabbles? I believe in your God because I have seen manifested the miracle of your strength and the sublimity of your beauty: but He seems foolish and intransigent and not a wise God of joy. Else He would let the two of us live in quiet peace in one another's arms. My love, you sound the bitter notes that fill my heart as well: in the dark night, when at prayer, I think upon the burden we are forced to share, I think upon the shameful insults you endure from my insolent people, the unbearable violation of your body, I think upon the hypocrites and warmongers who rule us for profit and glory and my brain seethes in doubt of God's wisdom and the final end of this crying world. It is easy for scribes and priests and philosophers to debate in learned halls the niceties of ritual and dogma: but you and I are the spirits of the struggling masses: we face the fang and claw, we face the armed multitudes with jawbones, we are the ones led into captivity and tortured, our bodies used as the playthings of wickedness. And there is no burning visionary light after my prayers: a silent flame flickers before the Ark and I hear nought but the voices of the night, the winged things and jackals far away. Perhaps my strength is not the manifestation of an inconceivable divine will but an accident of nature; perhaps the voice we hear is not that of God but just the lofty dreams of struggling humanity born of our poor brains: perhaps my warrior's cunning that fells cities and dupes the sophisticated war machine is simply a talent natural to me like the color of my eyes and not the whispered word of God. And perhaps our planned sacrifice and martyrdom is earth-spawned and futile and soon to be lost and twisted on the winds of time and in the mouths of ignorant men. I share your doubt and share your love and perhaps we are the universe's greatest fools for not fleeing

to the solitary edens in the mountains far away and letting the fools and mad men around us go hang. See him rut, my friend: see him grovel in her beauty though she is but a phantom and the warmth of her flesh a delusion. See the philosopher renounce the earthly pleasure of the simplest peasant girl because he must gratify his errant mind by possessing the ideal. Raphael looked down upon the copulating warlock, following the pointed finger. I regret the sins that necessitated this race: I regret they arose from the dust to be victimized by a fraudulent universe and not become its masters. Raphael looked at his darkened eyes and asked if that was the foreknown necessity and end. What do I know of the future? I create the future in my hands but travel always in darkness. I sow seeds never knowing how they will sprout. And I see this best of men, this wise philosopher who has mastered all of human love and dialectic, I see him embrace a phantom which could as easily have been a mouse or roach or lump of stinking dung. I grieve that the attribute of consciousness wherein lies the potential for such evanescent grandeur has by misfortune so developed in this race of men that it deludes as well as dreams, makes impotent as well as strong. Yet Raphael neither nodded nor denied: each according to his own lights. I am as tossed and whipped by the mystery of it all as he: I, who flit among light beams and plot the course of errant galaxies, I who know each spinning sun by name. Yet I see beyond my knowledge and my simple plane of consciousness and know there is plane upon plane and layer upon layers. And I too wallow in delusion, as do you my friend. We pity the blatant flaws in simple man: let us not scorn them. And the dark brows, cunning, turned to him and admired his pleasant smile and saw the lost light shining in his angelic features. O this sloth, I see it in his eyes, the languor born of too much flame, too much conquest. It racks me, pinions my ^{arms} and legs to this mattress, holds me tighter than a wild loving woman. My mind: sloth like open palms releases the fireflies of night: wild uncontrolled images, emanations from a hidden source without control, without meaning: why. And then those

faces, evil, rousing me (in a peasant night, torches and flames billowing in the darkness, chanting, hep-hep-hep: why. They break down the doors with a log and throw furniture about the room, shattering precious heirlooms: the mezzuzah is torn from the lintel and ground beneath an angry farmer's heel: the shabos candleholder is torn from the table and thrown out of doors into a cart already half filled with stolen treasures. The aged patriarch in night clothes moans for justice, for mercy: his throat is slit before the agonized eyes of his family. His son screams his rage and beats the invaders with weak fists but he is overwhelmed, trampled, and bound for later torture. His wife, her eyes large and beautiful and filled with pious wisdom swallows her grief and meets their impious hands with stony dignity. She is dragged out into the night. Her daughter too, a child approaching womanhood, bred for sanctity and the righteous caresses of a loving husband: she too is dragged out into the night, half naked and screaming, dragged with fervor, ignorant of the wickedness that is planned for her, fearful only of pain and death and the safety of her family. Hep: hep: hep: A hundred fires glow throughout the countryside, acrid smoke clouding the mournful moon, burning bitter nostrils. Again the lulled masses, thinking they were free, have been smitten, stormed in the dark night and taken unprepared. Sloth: the sloth of security, the sloth of civilization, the sloth of prosperity, the sloth of negotiation and election and representation: fictitious all, when the chant begins to fill the night air, when nameless terrors and hidden wickedness rise in timed souls making them seethe and sunder ^{for} ~~for~~ one night in their lives, one night that denies their impotence, one night that sees their shackled necks stiffen in ignorant bravado, one night in which all that is holy, all that is forbidden, is suddenly ^{there} ~~there~~ for the taking, half naked trembling women and wondering girls, virile men poised to be slaughtered, all for the illusion of manhood, the one taste of barbaric vitality they will have in their weak, empty lives: hep: hep: hep. Haw. Take her easy now boys, we want her to last. That's it, bring

her old lady over here, I want her to watch now, I want her to see it all. Damn, they breed some beautiful women, they do. Where do they get such weak and ugly men with mothers like these. Haw. Let's do her first, boys, that's a better idea: let's let the little kid watch and learn something so maybe she can entertain us better. Now lady, I'm sure you know what we're going to do to you: if you cooperate, maybe even act like you enjoy it, we'll go gently on your kid. Maybe we'll let her go even, but that's only if you're really good, if you can tire us out, satisfy us so much we won't care anymore for her tight little ass. Haw. So stop the struggling and the tears, they won't do any good anyway and they'll only make^K us angry and we'll take it out on your little girl, don't think we won't. The sneer, the fetid breath, this garlic-peasant, ignoramus, beast: awake. Your heathen women are supposed to be good, anyway, you godless sluts: now you can prove it to us, for the sake of your daughter over there. See the mean men who have their hands all over her: they're waiting for my signal. So make us happy and it will be easier all around. Rip off her blouse: ah, yes, what beautiful tits you have, so big and soft and such fat nipples. Haw. Bring the torches closer boys I want you all to see this. What they say about their women is right. Now her hair: yes, let it fall over her shoulders. Ah. Now pull that night dress off and let's see the rest. So. You women have the same parts as our women: good. I was afraid you might have the leather puckers of a horse down there. Haw. Look at that bush, thick, like her long black hair. Yes, my boys, take your time feeling her, she'll perform good I'm sure, if only for the sake of her little girl. That's right, squeeze, pull on those nipples, suck them, flick them with your tongues, that's it they're getting harder and stiffer, she likes it I think, I think she does, don't you honey, do her good now. Hep: hep: hep: the chant wafts over the flaming village, thatched huts burning, livestock running wild in the meadows: the chant that will echo throughout centuries. Spread her legs boys, that's it, line up, ah, oh, easy now, she's

more scared than wet, bring that lard over here, that's it, ah, yes, yes, oh, I'm in boys, see me, all the way to the root. That's it honey, entertain me, gyrate those hips, cool us off before we hit on your little girl. Ummm, you are good, I'll have to tell my wife about your little tricks, no wonder you people stick so close together:uh oh, I'm going to shoot, ooh, that's it, yes, you're good, so good, yes, umm, yes, oh: Oh. Haw. That was fine. OK boys, she's all yours: then we get the little girl. O the sorry billions who have suffered since the dawn of man on earth: what kinship have I with those butchers, why does this dark night, this moonless night, fill me with their panting dread? Why do I sweat when they triumph, what perverse strand of genetic acid galls our souls and makes us thrill at the torment of others, destroying ourselves through them? Poetry must survive through this night, it must coalesce the gossamer web of virtue and ideals and sentiment and resist the stark reality of cruelty. A fool am I: a sentimental sloppy fool, with pen in one hand and gun in the other: abandon the pen, the world shatters devotion and art makes us weak and civilization curses us with impotence. The veneer of civilization: cast it off and be damned to it. Succumb. Succumb: succubus. White goddess: wielder of the wind wand, mother of night and mystic visions: I am many men, I am too many selves, split in a thousand ancient cleavages, each soul harking to primal cries born in the bubbling ^{could be} ~~sublimation~~ of the cooling shell of earth. My selves war against each other, lust against chastity, peace against violence. This night of dreams, born of sloth and disaffection, born of labor and exultation, born of creation and decay, I shiver in this night because you grant me no peace, you have purloined my tranquility. Voices rim my dreams: doleful poetry and illiterate gobbling, dull offensiveness and vibrant frenzy. Voices of my soul, partaking of my thousand faces and I lose myself among the cataract of wailing voices, cajoling voices, sinful whispering voices. A poet you say? Ah, I remember the feel of your sleek arms as we wrestled in the desert. I turned that day from my lord to descend to you and meet you in loving combat.

It angered him, but what has he to say: my beauty resides in my breath of freedom and the rascal glint in my eye: he would have me no other way. And you battled like a warrior. Why, noble Ares had not the skill nor the stamina you displayed in the heat of that desert afternoon. And you, like me, are not of them: we are eternal strugglers, strivers after a wordless dream, strivers among a vale of monsters constantly challenging our right to live and dream. We haven't their omnipotence, to cast lightning with the wave of a rod or crush boulders into dust with the magnitude of our will. We are rooted in mortality and I love you all the more for that. You as servant of the goddess, I as servant of the god: we work for our immortality. Like ancient conquerors we carve immortal images of ourselves out of granite mountains and leave them to chagrin the following ages, the ages that will oppress our truths and mold us with their greedy hands to fit their lies about themselves. And the core of our truth will transcend the whims of fashion and caprice: disintegrate upon the winds, become the silken fabric of myth and sink into the genetic noumen as archetypes and vivid symbols for the torment of torrid dream-filled nights. Our immortality rests not in legend or a poem, or a child's song, but in the mumbled senseless incantations of the writhing sleeper, or the vision of the dying man. He leaned back upon the rock and faced the sun, and gathered his hair of hyacinth black in his hands and bound it behind his head with a thong of leather. His naked body gleamed in the hot sun. Play me one of your tunes, now that Hyperion fills the sky with his glory, and the winds are poised to carry your words to the sanctums of our great parents. So I plucked the strings of my harp and ^{opened} ~~poened~~ my heart to the divine afflatus, the canny eye of Selena. And the words flowed, beautiful and elegant, and he rested his hand on my thigh. Under another sun: a slave, captive of the Parthian wars, bends before a water bucket poised to drink. His fellows drop beside him, granted a brief respite from the endless quarrying that builds the emperor's villas and baths and cools the senator's uncalloused feet. Poised before the water, poised beneath that other sun, he sees himself reflected in the murky

mirror: his trembling hands agitate the image, jolting it into circles and fragments, a phoenix-face, scored and pouched with labor and despair. He sees the desolate image, once framed by the clouds of his homeland, once cheered by the soft touch of his bride's hand, once handsome and strong and beaming with dreams. The cabin they had built together in the woodland, and the fields he cleared and pens of livestock that whimpered and frolicked throughout the cloudless days. And the savage nights of lightning and thunder when the beasts huddled together beneath hide and fur, and they had lain together in bed holding each other, she trembling with a child's fear, yet glorying in his mighty protecting arm. The face in the bucket stared into his eyes, wordless yet damning, mournful of lost happiness: then with a stifled mighty moan, he raised himself up on palsied legs and with both fists clenched to the heavens he fell forward dead in the dust. And the centurions left his bones to rot in the communal pit and threw the murky water onto a pile of dried, fly-encrusted dung. What peace is that which makes us slaves to custom? How many heads must be lopped before the fingers rebel and turn brutally upon the butchering oppressors? They left her to die in the rubble of the apartment house, shot her up like a rabid dog and marched on, scouring the neighborhood for more of us. We are multitudes I shouted from the roof and the grenade landed on their armored transport and blew them all to hell. They carried me down from the edge of the roof, from the precarious, dizzying edge of the roof and dragged me screaming in rage to the new shelter. Their need calmed me, their desperate dependence on my one mortal voice soothed the bloody rage within me and the incantations of their whispers stilled the flame of my heart. Be still friendly element: the mirror in which the ancient mothers weave and sever the strands of fate, the mirror that holds them up to mortal light rested in my weary brain. Fatigue: sloth: a willingness to die, to abandon all, the dreams, the follies, the tormenting illusions. She knows all my secrets. From beneath his wide-brimmed hat with the gold buckle, he watched the Doll-Woman gathering flowers

in the meadow. She's seen me weak and angry, she's seen me tired beneath the leaves and unconcerned about the faltering birds caught in the first chill winds of autumn. The Doll-Woman smelled the fresh-plucked ~~Y~~erbena blossoms, and the lilacs, and the sprigs of honeysuckle. With nimble fingers she pulled the pistil out from the back of a honeysuckle blossom and sucked the bit of sweetneess. Her wings, clear with veins of silver, sparkled in the summer sun, drying from some unseen wetness. I think she's casting a spell on me: one of her slow ones, they linger the longest. He scratched his furry ear, perplexed. I try to soothe her with my music, I know she loves my music, but she laments the night away on a lily pad, humming to the frogs and crickets, singing with them, telling them about us, about me especially and my infernal cruelty. Why did I do it? Why did I abandon myself to her prettiness. It's tinsel, really: all glittery but you can't eat it and after Christmas it has to be thrown away. Christmas: the Winter Feast. She and I in our whittled tree, little fireflies dancing for light, we had such a nice party. The past can't be brought back: there's an end of it. Look at her, loving those flowers, I used to. But now all my robins are ravens and all my tulips are briars. Home for the rabbit, haven for the heart. No, I don't know how she's doing it but I'm changing. The Red Calliope King plays his music from his quartz mountain organ, just as before. We grow old and disappear up the pipes and he sends new ones down ^hanging from each musical note, just as before: as it's been since time began. Everything should be the same. When I see their round smilingness floating down past his great musical hands, I feel happy all over. It all should be the same. The Doll-Woman hummed a tune from amidst the forest trees, and flitted from branch to branch gathering multicolored pollen-powders for her herb box. But somehow I'm different, I'm changing. Maybe it's my time to go up the pipes. I don't want to. But I'm just getting too serious for this round body of mine, these furred feet, this absurd nose. I'm changing, like a caterpillar: into what? O well, I'll drink her herb tea\$

and see if they can't help me. She's so astute. She knows all my vulnerabilities, and yet she understands me so well. He rolled his furry bottom on the soft moss. Ah yes, like when I was a young one, it felt so good. When I could scream against the mountains and feel the rumble of the earth-trolls beneath my feet: when I played upon the buckhorns and rode with the wind upon whirligig seedlings: when autumn sang to me songs of harvest and scurried scents of bursting seedpods all around me: when crystal winter whisked me along frozen streams and danced my bottom into mounds of soft snow: when all was new and fresh. She still feels that joy. She has surpassed my endurance, maybe with hidden woman's lore, her lore of beetles and herbs and reading the future in the twist of the leaves. Maybe that's how you stay happy: by seeing more. And look at her still, so very beautiful. ^{at} I went into him this night, at last, and lay beside him and stifled his surprise with a kiss. I am not beautiful. I don't have the full soft body that men die for or the speaking eyes that bring them madness. But what I have and what I am I give to you. It need only be this once: this night in thousands I want as a special moment of sacrifice, sacrificial offering and sublime beauty. Let the world go on as it always has, tomorrow ~~and~~ ^{and} the day after and for days without end. But this night I lie with you and hold your soul conjoined with mine. And he smiled somewhat sadly and worshipfully, and he ran his calloused hands along my breasts ~~and~~ ^{and} ribs, his thumbs caressing my nipples. And the night filled with sudden angelic sounds which I knew were the hordes of beautiful spirits circling through my child's innocent dreams. And sometimes I brush the ⁿexus of dimensions with my words: he sits in a corona of lamplight, seeking the stars of his mind with the lenses of his thought. There are others ~~out~~ there who know me, who know my words before I write them, who lilt the cadences of my sentences before I conceive them. He bends over a notebook and scribbles his thoughts in a tiny cribbed handwriting. I will not be contained: neither the dimensions of the canvas nor ^R the vying lives of the orchestra will dictate a single pro-

jection ~~so~~^{of} my thought. I am heir to the modern decay of the past and the tenuous foothold of the future: my craft admits no compromise. Let me seethe in this timeless hour, linger in the limbo of my inspiration and embody the divine spirit that consumes me. And the bush~~h~~was not consumed. So are we all: phantoms, projections on the screen of time to dance our parts and vanish with the rotation of starlight. This wheeling universe, apprehended in its entirety by the collective mind of man: that would put the ~~f~~period to our craven slumber and unite us in a vital ~~ecstasy~~ of vision. Not the renunciation of the East: fakirs meditating amidst the squallor of degradation and contumely. I despise them, the exploiters, the frauds, the serene charlatans. But what have I to offer the world? My solitary voice, my stroke upon the nexus of dimensions, my quest. It's nothing. It's all nothing. And I feel the flicker of my art dying, fading into the moonless night. Darkness: no, come back, such music, such gentle soothing rhythms, my tormented mind responds like a sponge, soaking up the soporific peace, the serenity and joy that is the ~~confutation~~ of fatigue and sloth. Come back. And the sloe-eyed queen gazed upon her dying lord: how frail is this son of Ammon. How slowly come his breaths, labored, wheezing. I won him with the amulet of my body. I woke demons within him to force him to open for me alone the gates of eternity. I will follow him: it is the law. So be it. Grand will I be in that other world, the hand-maiden of Isis, privy to her confidences: she will come to me as I bask on stars and ask me to share her bed. And there I will lie by her side, feeling her perfect body with my fingertips, sucking her divine nipples with my hungry mouth. Such bliss: I never knew such bliss with his mad whims. His carved ivories and obscene godlings staring at me from around the bed. But he will lead me onward to what I have always sought: a union with Isis the divine, the coalescence of our spirits. All shall be timeless then, one grand moment of ecstasy in which all time and space unite in pleasure and the simple mortal mind is overthrown by the grandeur of the gods. The price is death, mutilation: it is nothing. Bits of me spiced and urned in pomp, with mystic incantations:

let them gyrate and mumble. My queenly spirit has no need of them, I shall
 far sooner fly to Isis' arms. No. ~~The~~ butcher's window: parts of me torn from
 me alive, hung on great meat hooks to be gawked at by all who pass. My head
 still shrieks in protest: take me if you must, use me, let me be your champion,
 but not these incisions, not this callous revelation of all that I am, preserve
 me some mystery, some aura of omnipotence. Leave some doubt about my weaknesses
 and some assumption of great strength. Not those ragged bloody fragments,
 that crooked ungainly lump there, that foot with absurd toes, toes once poised
 in life to battle injustice from ~~the~~^R rooftops and concrete parapets. Those hunks
 of meat: dared they champion ideals? Virtue: goodness: justice: what traffic
 have they with those moist hooked joints and severed roasts? Where is the
 man in all that? The man behind the words, you say? Grotesquely obese, the
 scion of an ancient family smiled into the eyes of the stringy abbé and his
 secretary. If it can be of interest to your superiors what manner of man it
 is that can so graphically catalogue the true functioning of our human nature,
 then be assured I shall oblige you. Gentlemen, allow me first to emphasize
 my devotion to truth: not the mystical, supposedly revealed truth that may
 be more to your liking but the enlightened truth of reality. He clasped his
 pudgy hands behind his neck, reclining in his chair against the wall of his
 cell. We have passed through an era that was dedicated to truth and the freedom
 of the human spirit: all fictions and fairytales, sops for weak minds, were
 abandoned and enlightened atheism was adopted in their place, a freedom for
 men and women to guide themselves according to their own natural lights. Haw.
 It was a dismal failure. I knew it would be. One must be prepared for freedom:
 one must be acclimated to the excesses of which liberated human nature is
 capable. I told them so, it's all clear in my books. But you see how those
 who refuse to acknowledge the truth in regard to human nature reward their
 prophets. He motioned vaguely ~~to~~^{at} his musty ~~en~~^virons. But again, gentlemen,
 I am not bitter. I expected it to be so. Indeed, each day I pass in this
 institution only affirms in one or more particulars the absolute rectitude

of my convictions. Gentlemen, look about you: at the inmates howling and dribbling in their food pans, at the absurd guards cracking their lips, lounging in dark corners staring into the cages. Here, gentlemen, we have human nature unalloyed: freed in this isolated environment to display itself as it really is. In my youth I rebelled against the repressions of the sterile clerics who would tell my vigorous body what pleasures it could and could not enjoy. I believed that by harkening to the spontaneous dictates of my nature I could release the god within me and rise up gloriously to my full potential as a man and as an intellect. And the hope I held out for myself I generously extended to all of humanity. But with age comes wisdom: in my many years devoted to the study of man and nature I learned two things: first, I saw the hypocrisy and arrogant ignorance that were the foundations of contemporary ethics, the belief in god and devotion to the church and all that. The secretary scribbled furiously. And secondly, I learned that by ridding myself of the ignorance and injustice of the past (and this, may I say, was the most painful lesson) I did not discover an intimate core of purity, virtue and nobility within me but rather a voracious beast, rampant with a myriad of lusts. But know thyself as the Delphic oracle would have it, so I accepted what my inner vision displayed to me and attempted to articulate this vision in the many books and dramas which your superiors as well as the officials of the secular arm of the government have seen fit so often to burn. His heavy jowls twitched and his eyes looked oddly into space, but he pressed unobtrusively against his twitching cheek with his hand and turned to his two visitors with a cordial smile. Mind you, I bear no grudges. It was to be expected: I am not such a fool to think that the wholly inflammatory nature of my writings, which I acknowledge to be obscene by even the most liberal criteria of judgment, would be let pass with official sanction when far less inflammatory and daring works are daily censored and burned in the streets: books whose sole claim to infamy lies in an abstruse philosophical paragraph here or a serpentine sentence there.

O no: think what you will of me, but I am no fool. Nor am I ~~naive~~. No gentlemen, I hold no animosity toward anyone. My one regret in life-- and here he looked out at the patch of sky seen through the tiny barred window-- is that my genius has been too precise and my judgment too keen. O for the illusions of youth, gentlemen. Cherish them, I say, for they are precious and too quickly shattered. When I was young I believed that sin and evil were dangerous simply because they were condemned by false and hypocritical social and religious institutions and were of necessity clandestine. Much of what society condemned as ^{sin}ful, particularly in the realm of the erotic, was not ^{sin}ful at all. It was the stigma and the false guilt that drove men mad. And then came the revolution and the triumph of reason over superstition and I felt that a new era of realistic freedom was to begin: a kind of gnosticism in which both good and evil would be acknowledged as the two faces of this coin we call the universe. Such fluent prose: such logical progression of thoughts. Those early ^Kworks of mine were artistic masterpieces, gentlemen, even with the lurid spice of graphic details. But as I matured I learned to recognize the innate hopelessness of mankind's fate. I abandoned philosophy and the search for happiness through a philosophic hedonism. This is why I can accede to your visit, gentlemen, with jovial cordiality: the superstitious garbage you represent is no more futile or foolish than the most liberal, humanitarian philosophy. We are beasts, gentlemen, drawn by dark forces deep within our soul to seek our own destruction amidst the most frenzied carnal ^{al}excesses. That which ~~tends toward~~ the most ^harm we flock to with the greatest alacrity. O I don't simply mean pursuing that which is forbidden in sexual lust: I mean the way we embrace maniacal conquerors as saviors and rush to fill the ranks of armies destined to pursue futile slaughter and rapine. I mean the way we renounce our ideals and youthful aspirations to destroy ourselves slowly pursuing the goals others establish for us. Why, we toss our own lives away more casually than one would toss away a sou. There is something innate about

this self-destructiveness of our species that I cannot begin to fathom. But we make crimes of our pleasures and virtues of our crimes: what exquisite tortures we inflict upon ourselves, torture's far more devastating than any of the shacklings or beatings found in my books. Yes, gentlemen, my disillusion has affected my life and my art. I am a waddling hulk of flesh where once I was an athletic debauchee, if you will, I who once spent a ^{long} ~~long~~ evening in sportive lust with the great Voltaire. And I can smile and nod and speak calmly with you or with any of my fellow inmates or even with my friends the guards where once I would have raged furiously at your base ignorance and at the injustice of my incarceration. You see, disillusionment breeds a certain serenity: you and my drooling fellows and the bleary-eyed guards and even I are all the same. Communication is futile among us all: we will hear what we wish to hear and believe what we wish to believe. I no longer seek the convert: I just talk and write and hope for nothing. Really, such equanimity can be quite refreshing after a life of the most ardent passion. And it has had most serious and amusing consequences upon my art, gentlemen. Why, look here, look at these pages from my latest and longest work: it has become a mere enumeration of atrocities, a catalogue of torture and mutilation: there are no real characters, no florid prose, none of the pretentious logic of my rationalist period. Surely, the world must find this bald recitation of torments and perversions disgusting. I do so myself when I put down my pen. Here, take a page, read, each is numbered, the victims are all nameless and faceless, I have strained my imagination to set down on paper every conceivable lustful torment. Shocking, no? I'm sure you are wondering if this fat man sitting before you, speaking so calmly to you has ever performed any of these activities. Alas, gentlemen, ^t ~~but~~ for the relatively tame debaucheries of my earlier works, I am innocent. Indeed, where would I acquire the multitude of children and virgins for my picturesque scenarios? I dare say there aren't enough virgins in all of Europe. And communities do avenge themselves upon the likes of me:

why a child can't disappear in a forest for a night without five hundred Jews being tortured and burnt at the stake for ritual murder. No, gentlemen, I confess: ^ethese atrocities are the product of my turbulent but disillusioned imagination. To ask what might I have become had I grown up differently, had I a mentor of more noble qualities, why that is mere wind: I doubt if even the great Socrates could have done much with me as a pupil. I am that I am, gentlemen, as are we all: nothing can be done about it even had we the wisdom to ~~choose~~ ^{choose} a proper path for ourselves on this road of life.. So I am just happy to sit here and ~~converse~~ ^{converse} and write and think upon the past: the present is absurd in this den of howling lunatics and the future, well, the future does not even exist. I write what I do the way I do because that is how I must write, that is how my soul demands to express itself: I but obey. I find the cold fury of my prose calms the gnawing impotence I feel when confronted with the absurdity of the world. There is nothing to be done out there: I could join the hawkers at the market place, peddling my delusions in competition with their^s. But to what end? No, I will stay here and contemplate this microcosm of the madness of the world and calm my soul with my dreams and my pen. Well certainly, if you must leave, you must: but on your way out have Francois show you some of our local heroes. We have our own Napoleon here. And even our own Jesus. Isolated: closed in. God, what a tremendous bore. She dragged deeply on the cigarette bathed in the cone of lamplight. It's funny how we kill love. There was something once between us, I suppose. It seems so far away now. But then the selfish motives we have are hidden by the excitement, the novelty, the forbiddenness of the whole thing. When a woman's young she can twist a man to her way of thinking with her body. Or she's secure enough in her own attractiveness that she can keep the reins loose, let them slide away from her: it's exciting then. But sooner or later we grow apart, grow older, become cruel. Cruel. A harsh word, but fitting. God, the chains we think of then to keep them with us. She presses her palms against her

swollen womb. Two failures already. All the hopes shot to hell in a single run to the bathroom and a splash of blood on the floor. And then what? We stood looking at each other and he said kind soft words to me and I cried and yelled. We both wondered if it was something wrong with us: typical. It's strange: I don't know if I care if it happens again. Being pumped up with babies time and again, swelling up like a goddamned beach ball: and some women love it. Ten kids, twelve kids. My mother: nine kids, no money, dad working himself to death and those Jewish newspapers we used to lay out on the table instead of a cloth. Eating in shifts. Brotherhood they say: we fought like cats for every scrap. How they envied me when I brought him home. Money, a New York sophisticate, dapper, charming: god, he was like something out of a fairy tale. And that fortune teller at the carnival we went to on that first date: seedy old bag, I thought she'd be jealous of my looks and my date and say something bitter. But no, they can't make any money that way. They want a regular clientele. His mother now, and his aunt: old crones running into Manhattan every few days to have their cards read. Christian Scientists: Hah. Jews just like me only too cheap to pay for a doctor. I'm glad he's not like that. But he's been around too much to fall for that baloney. I mean it's nice to believe that there is some possibility that ordinary people can see into the future: we want to believe in miracles, in flying saucers. She looked real strange when she flipped over those cards: tableau cards? I don't remember. What was it now: a child, something about the moon and a king of twelve tribes and the house of David. She saw I was Jewish I guess, it's in my eyes, they always tell you what you would like to hear. But he had to force that money on her: his smile and blue eyes, so kind, so insistent. When he looks at me like that, I melt: I'm too weak for him really. He knows it; I know it: that's what makes me angry. So now it's come to this, this chain in my guts, force him to see I can do something right, I can keep him with me. God it's hot and my ankles feel like craam puffs. It'll come soon: I hope it's a boy. A

girl won't mean much to him after the others. First a boy, then the girls can come later. Serve him right: give him a son then flood the place with daughters. When's he coming back: those damn trips, off every few weeks to check on his lines. Side trips to I-know-where, too, When he scores he can't do enough for me, his sisters, everybody. Why, he'd give a ten dollar bill to any bum with a cup on the street. His face beams when he walk^s in the door and he's got a wad that could choke a horse. But the other times are more frequent: that's what they count on, those mobsters. They're no fools. They're not in business to give money away. Then he's not smiling and we start to wonder about the rent and then the big house we're going to get seems farther and farther away. Will he stop when the kid comes, or will he use it as an excuse to go more often. Leave me here with damn diapers and bottles. I like the shows and the nightli^fe there, too. We used to have such fine times, all the maitre d's fussing over him, front row seats, all those almost naked showgirls making his eyes sparkle. Years ago I didn't mind: then I could compete without fear. But I grow older and the showgirls, well of course they change them, throw them out when they're too old, so that's why the chorus lines always are just as young as the first time you see them. What was that he read to me from that Greek myth book he picked up, just a dirty book it was he found in the airport about the goddesses taking a magic bath and making them virgins again. Now I could use something like that. And they were immortal, they didn't even need it. It figures. They way of the world. She dragged again on the cigarette, replacing it in the glass ashtray. They have beautiful bodies, those women. So did I when I was younger. I could have been a ballerina. My teacher paid my way to that fancy woman who had the dance troupe when I was just fifteen. I was a showpiece for her. I could pirouette and even do one of those what are they grand jettes. Damn. No, I had to quit, I had to support my dear mother who had eight other brats around her why couldn't she just let me alone and live my life. Now look at me: swollen like a blimp wondering

if my husband will come home with a fortune or with another two years of bank
 loans and debts. A dancer tours the world: all the fancy cities that are whis-
 pers from fairy tales. When I'm on the road with him where do we go: Cleveland,
 Nashua, Springfield, St. Paul. God. What a screaming bore...(No. Not this)
 That moonless night (No) that moonless night when you sat naked on the bath
 tub and she refuted your anguish with her rhetoric and (No) all the heartaches
 that wracked your soul she reduced to nothing, to phantasms or madness (No. Stop.)
 And that was the hour of your greatest sorrow whereingspawed the rebellion
 and the carnage and epoch turns of history. She saw your pain and mocked its
 vigor by spitting out at you its groundlessness, its foundation in error.
 (O God) And you were overwhelmed on that dark night by the clawing pain and
 rage and the verity of the cold words and her cold eyes. And you dissolved
 that night (God no no) in heaving sobs and tears, and your soul died that
 night, shrivelled in the sudden solitude that fell upon you like remorseless
 snow. Empty and emasculate you became when love dissolved into bitterness
 and the string of life's sorry years loomed before your eyes like an ancient
 beast, malevolent and forbidding. I see him kneeling in the garden looking
 up at the full moon veined by the fine twigs of a fig tree. His comrades sleep.
 His brows knit in doubt and rage that he of all men should be so beset by visions,
 that words he knows not spill from his lips and bring thousands of the woeful
 masses flocking to his side, that the infirm so thrill with the magnetism of
 his eyes and the softness of his voice that they abjure their demons and in-
 firmities and rise to wobbling feet to mingle in the procession that follows
 him. This somber night in the garden, his soul a thousand miles from his
 snoring friends, is not a night of strength blossoming out of intense weakness:
 it is not an hour of final determination and resolution before the ultimate
 sacrifice. Rather it is a moment of awakening, of disillusionment, of rejection
 and solitude. The voices have departed, the high ideals seem awkward and
 foolish, the inner voice of affirmation stands now, when most needed, revealed
 as a silent harlequin fraud. And the sacrifice will proceed because his universe

is shattered and the dream is dead and he, like us all, must go the way of the dream. It was a corpse they nailed that day, betrayed, bloated with veracity, at last a citizen of the Roman sepulchre, his eyes vacant in the glaring light of the Roman day. He died too wise to whimper under the desert sun: he died silent when the two thieves sought to cheer this mystical philosopher with banter from their stores of worldly experience: he died twice, they tell it wrong he did not live twice but died twice, ~~primarily in the garden, secondarily in the cross.~~ And the lost chroniclers, fabricating out of his dissolution a metaphor for their wild hopes wrote that he forgave with one foot in the next world, that at the moment of his deepest loss, the instant of his deepest woe, he forgave, he spoke with his heavenly father and forgave the ignorant mortals for their unwitting sin. But in truth he was empty of magnanimity^N and blind and agonized and sick of all this sorry life. The psalms wherein he had found such peace, the tremulous muted tunes he had made of them in the night when like David he sat before the fire and drew spiritual sustenance from the trilling life of the desert, he mocked them now, he mocked their futile words of love and their silent god too perfect^C for this world of dark^K disdaining men. And the patriarch Jacob, a gaunt bearded phantom crouched on the mattress, obscured in shadow: Remorse, it is, that makes history. How well I know that. I've seen my sons and daughters scattered to the four wild winds. There isn't a cranny on this earth that doesn't know their pain or ~~their~~^{their} dissipation. We create an illusion^{of} to sin, a bogey to frighten children into obedience, and we end up believing it ourselves. We run from our guilt bearing our offending consciences with us and we keep on running, building cities to hide in, making money to indulge lusts and appetites so we can forget. Always we run. Always we leap out of ourselves into the canyons of disillusion. And we build our successful lives with the mortar of insincerity, with wide friendly grins, without passion, without meaning. But in the end it catches up: few men die with a last smile on their lips. A sneer maybe, or a grimace: but mostly the

lips just die and part and the muscles relax, ~~and he looks like a man with a~~
~~bad adenoid problem.~~ I condemned my own brother and his seed to unrighteous
expulsion from our heritage. I made of him an outcast and a wanderer. Did
Cain do as much when he spilled his brother's life blood on the ~~grass~~ of Eden?
You toss in this dark night like a wounded animal thrashing in a trap waiting
for the hunter. Be assured, he'll come. They sneak up on you, they always
take you in the fullness of your sins and carry you out of the fugitive's chaos
to that other world where you can sit back and watch the fruition of your
lusts and cruelties. Do we sin, or do we simply act as we must, so we live
according to our nature? Toss, my friend, ~~toss~~^s in that fitful sleep. I see
your face beaded with sweat. You ~~burn~~^R for an offense to love. Why regret
the past, my friend? It does no good. She was, you were, and that is the tale
in its entirety. Better to do as I do: blame an angel. Tell him he has wounded
you unjustly, making you unworthy. Then an angel will appear to answer your
accusations and at least talk with you, cryptically maybe, or in playful meta-
phor, teasing you out of yourself, relieving you, helping you to forget. And
after the hunter's hour? There: he rises, a titan curled beneath the sea,
tidal waves spill from his scaly shoulders, he shakes his long seaweed locks
wet-slapping in the salty air: he rises from his tomb beneath the sea. Islands
shiver their ancient moorings at the press of his hand and drift wildly upon
the waves: archipelagos vanish beneath the splash of his tread. He stalks
the dry continents with the fiery eyes of a beast: harbinger of the last days,
mighty progenitor of all that is immense and heroic: the stuff of nightmare.
He troughs my sleep with the sweep of his majestic shoulders. The ripples
of wake break and splash into droplets of horrifying images, ~~nightmares~~^{ghosts} and
phantoms thirsting for my fatigued soul. I feel the cold ~~spray~~^{drops} on my neck,
cringe at the icy spray that convulses my naked chest. Where is the word,
where is the incantation that can release me ~~from~~^{from} this horror, stem the progress
of destruction? His face: that face again. Out of the salty mists, out of

the dark cavern ~~dark~~ and the staleness of old air locked for millenia away from the rapture of the wind. He bends over the first-kill, his seamed and gutted paws groping toward tenderness. The aged chieftain rages with his eyes, his spine cleft, immobile yet ludicrously spasmed. And he with the jeyes of fire stares down at the gnarled weapon in his hand and looks into the dying face as if to ascertain that the aged warrior understands. A man to a beast it is, however: explain away death to a mutilated leopard, impotent and furious. The dank stench of the ancient caves fills their souls, permeates their feeble recollections, and they flee under their new chieftain to the lowlands where fruit and strange grains abound.

Where is the laughter of my night? I can't entertain you always. His heavy face smiled feebly. I won't always be here to assert the ultimate comedy of this human travesty called life. Mine is a languid spirit: I bear a multitude of masks and pass my hours in metamorphosis and transformation. Cynical, I satirize the fools that bargain with the devil even though I don't believe in the devil. Mischievous, I tweak the nose of fate. I laugh in the face of solemnity. But I can't be summoned at your every whim. And he grinned, broadly and gap-toothed, like a Cheshire cat, and he squatted on a chair, spinning. Spinning, he smiled warmly, his deep caverned laugh reverberating through the room, pushing the four walls outward, farther ^N and farther until they reached the domain of the winds, one north, one east, one south, one west. I spin now, and his laughter blossoms within me: O grave phantasm. And the spin whelped a whirling globe, motion without friction, a mystical centripetality became lives that gawked at that same centripetality and that swung by ~~by~~ their feet pressed against the whirling globe with the booming laugh as faint echo in the backdrop of the universe, the cosmic stuff of stars and ether, drifting, eternal, pulsing, laugh upon laugh. And within his stone cell the somber cowed figure studied a parchment that told of forbidden things and he pressed his palms to his temples as night grew darkest and wept for his own soul: and the butcher's wife writhed in her bed in the night, her head filled with the thump of chopping, thick-blooded beast muscles passing beneath her husband's brawny paws, his knuckles hairy and thick with blood, and he kneaded the yielding rich muscles tenderly with his iron fingers and they oozed blood at his touch, and she grew hot in the night, her loins moistening in the throes of her brutal dream and she moaned huskily in the dark night: and down by the docks in the shadows of the warehouses two men look hungrily into each other's eyes and take their lust to a truck where they open, not fully, their clothes and their thick silver belt buckles shimmer in the harsh glare of a passing headlight as they furtively seek deeper shadows and one takes the other's cock in his

hand and thinks of a boy hidden in the fields of his hometown far away, light years, and that boy's clear eyes shine through the dark brows of this moaning man's face ^{and} ~~and~~ he sucks his cock in the shadow of a truck and they rock back and forth together warmed by the rhythm of the rising estuary, swelling them, shrivelling them, washing them in dreams: and a man who is nothing sits in a lonely apartment, his bare chair isolated from the dark walls, placed squarely in the center of the room, and he rests a book in his lap but somehow the authors never speak in his voice and he cannot reach into their words and find the solace he seeks for his life has been narrow and there are no ghosts to haunt him except the phantom of a lost youth he never really knew he had and sits beneath the glaring bare bulb and turns pages, his lips moving slightly ^{with} ~~and~~ the words and his face is puzzled and his mind rests upon thoughts of his own sudden ^{death} ~~and~~ and a woman waits in lamplight for the birth of an unwanted son to hold her husband faster to her, to curb his flights, his excesses, her nights alone: and an adolescent boy with the first soft pubic down on his cock is locked in a bathroom with a magazine, quite tame, yet which has pictures that dizzy his mind with awesome lust and he plays with his cock, thrilling at his crime, trembling at violation ^{of} the forbidden, listening for footsteps and that deadly rattling of the doorknob and he wonders why all this world is forbidden to him, all the pleasures of others are a mystery and a temptation to his child's eyes: and a hesitant priest speaks to his flock about a god he has not known or felt in years and the curious sorrow in his eyes as he relates that god's passion makes one see the priest himself nailed ~~to~~ that cross on that thunderous afternoon and facing, agonized, irrevocable fate and an empty sky: and a student writes by lamplight in a pale dormitory, unaware that civilization has conspired against his youth and has diverted his protean energies from the glorious vagaries of living into the shackles of categories and logic and authority, the oppressive handmaidens of the very, very old: and on a dismal street corner, the domain of junkies and mangy dogs and filth, an old black

man, no longer beset by visions or hope, wails a bluesy saxophone to the sky, bending and weaving with each mellow run of notes, his old lungs heaving the music to god and some passersby pause for an instant to bathe in the blues that so eloquently speaks to them without words and then they turn and walk^K on, listening with their backs to the music that softly fades away: and in a dark burlesque house a blonde ~~spirit of love~~^{dancer} with pendulous breasts sways before the old men who gawk at her, her mind filled with classic visions of the dance and she contemplates without bitterness the twisted ~~weakness~~^{inertia} that keeps her on these sleazy stages showing her pussy to tired old men: and a slight man with thinning blonde hair and a neat business suit sits quietly in the children's playground rectifying his loveless solitude with eyes that dart from child to child as they frolic sensuously on swing and slide: and a beast-man, a throwback to ancient days of jungle and steamy mist, rages against the pushcart he maneuvers through the crowded garment district and slams it into another with subsequent spilling of bolts of fabric and dresses all over the street, and the beast-man attacks, exulting, alive for once as he pounds the bloody face of the other tired man: and in a classroom a child looks up his last name in the encyclopedia to share vicariously the glory of that mystical union he ~~sees~~^{seals} linking strangers with the same name while his father is only a salesman: and straddling a concrete sculpture in the deserted park, a man weeps for his lost youth and rages against ~~the~~^{the} tumult of the world that has shattered his soul and filled his sleepless nights with visions of butchery and blood: and a gaunt philosopher sits in a shadowed cell, closed in upon himself, his bony, veinous hands entwined, his fingers feeling the convolutions of his flesh, his soul withdrawn from the majesty of his idyllic visions into the concrete cube of reality: and a youth in the fullness of his eager adolescence dreams wantonly of a beautiful patriot with wide silver eyes and his heart pounds in his chest and his fingers absently play up and down upon the bore of a submachine gun: and a fleeing patriot bursts inadvertently into a building

honeycombed with feds to dodge a search party and his body is scattered on winds of blood to the four silent corners of the universe in a relentless hail of bullets: and a fat man seated upon his toilet in the early morning feels the sluggish excrement drip from him, flatulent and hot, as his life drips from him, decadent and palsied from excess, his guts torn with fears and hatreds and deceptions: and a crowd of students stung by the implacable presence of rebellion rise with placards and angry gestures against the sightless campus buildings and soon are dispersed in flame and bullets by mounted police: and by the side of a purling brook some patriot leaders meet and discuss strategy for a campaign to capture an armory with their small pack of midnight commandoes: and a man bends over a desk trying to tear from his turbulent thoughts an image of himself and his world and his metaphors refuse to ^{co}~~ca~~alesce because his world does not coalesce and he has not coalesced: and high above the tenements nestled far from the mysterious movement of all life below, a boy and girl shun the light and he takes off her underpants and probes her smooth softness with dirty boyish fingers and both their eyes are wide with wonder and she touches his stiff cock and presses a droplet of moisture from it neither of them knowing what that foretells: and a youth, giddy and stoned, spins round and round in a chair, his guts ill with vertigo, yet he laughs and gurgles out his pleasure until the spinning chair falls on its side: and the hieroglyphics in the Egyptian room of the museum turn from their contemplation of the sun disk and scramble out of their stiffness to raise the ankh in their fineboned hands and look out on the real world with wide eyes: and a car careens into oncoming traffic because its driver has been snatched suddenly from this life and now explores another plane of existence: and out of the cemetery that faces the highway rattling voices rise from the moist earth and ask why, why: and in a quiet room a black man with a majestic king's face and royal eyes stares intently at the bar of silver in his deft hands and he carves it into a mystic pschent and crozier with a humming drill: and a roving street gang of the earth's

scum seek to profit from chaos through pillage and rape, unaware that chaos
 has liberated them from the lenience of the law to the relentless and irrefutable
 inner law of the jungle beast and they die protesting, without recourse to
 appeal, filled in their final instants of life with fear and animal surrender:
 and an old man, ragged and prophetic, foretells the end of the world, wandering
 among the flames and rubble of the city streets, his companions a pack of
 snarling wild dogs, their fur as foul and matted as his wild hair, and their
 beast's eyes as glaring as his eyes of prophecy, and he moves among their
 snarling violence with impunity, his shaggy head rocking with laughter: and
 the bloated body of a drowned soldier bobs like a cork out of the swirl of
 the sea and is washed ashore on Coney Island beach: and an old virgin woman
 sees life for the first time in the startled and eager eyes of the young fugitives
 she has determined to hide from their enemies: and a darkeyed dancer, beautiful
 as a goddess with a sensuous mouth and perfect, firm body, thinks only of
 money as she sways naked above the heads of the panting old men: and an astron-
 omer removes a photographic plate from a machine that has scattered the light
 of the universe into its component rainbows so that he may swallow the rapture
 of the night and humid stars and unlock, ancient alchemist, ^{their} ~~the~~ secrets: and
 a silent man lies awake in bed, late at night, and listens to a man recount
 his adventures on the planet Venus where he had been shanghaied and examined
 by strange creatures of eerie and compelling beauty ^{and} ~~and~~ his heart swells with
 visions as the tinny voice evokes and this drab world sickens his soul and
 his irrevocable bonds to this terrestrial mud sickens his soul and his sick
 soul wanders farther from sleep, drifting far far into the beyond, the realm
 of starlight and eternal night: and the young girl thinks how strange she feels
 when he smiles at her and her body thrills and her hands drift beneath her
 covers to the fleshy mound of soft hair and she strokes her cunt with light
 fingertips and thinks of his ideal body and the mystery of sex and she grows
 moist and breathes faster and she moans in animal lust and ecstasy in the

dark night of her bed: and the poet, ^{awash}~~awash~~ in the blood of the hills, stares
 at the comet exultant in the mountain night, and cannot capture the moment
 with words so lays on his back silent, awash in the blood of the hills: and
 the trapped patriot, her hair shiny and wild in the moonlight stares into
 a narrowing circle of eyes that approaches her mocking, eager for a night of
 lust and sadism and mutilation and she stares like an imperious queen into
 their bestial eyes and she is the most beautiful of all god's works and at
 this, the height of her beauty, she whips a hidden pistol from her sash and
 blows out her brains, leaving but carrion to dogs: and caught in the midst
 of her journal entry, she rests pinned behind rubble writing in the feeble
 filtered light of the moon and she tries with all her roving intellect to set
 down on paper soon to be burned what life has meant to her and how her intellect
 perceives the coalescence of the physical and the agitated ether of space and
 the fragments of time: and she is beautiful in the night, shedding her moon-
 blue silk gown and cuddling into the arms of the wise older woman, and she
 is so beautiful that the older woman shields her like a daughter from the
^w~~phantom~~ eyes of night and weeps, weeps and weeps that such beauty should rest
 in the holy silence and softness of her arms: and the television glows with
 sophisticated phosphorescent gaudiness like an angler-fish, floating blind
 in the black depths of the ocean, and a voice, polished, universal, terrorizes
 the anxious family with a recitation of the progress of armageddon: and eager
 lights flash before the eyes of the sleeping giant and his body rumbles in
 the night preparatory to awakening and shaking the accumulated humus and shale
 of eons from his massive shoulders and his rising ^u~~fiery~~ and terrible in the
 full intensity of the moonlight, and cities will shiver and crash to the ground
 at his approach and his lightest footfall will grind granite to dust as he
 strides onward over the face of the earth, the harbinger of the end of the
 world: and the spas of the wealthy shimmer in the tropical sun, quivers of
 heat from the ground making the world undulate sensuously like the sleek tanned

bodies of the young rich women, bodies made beautiful by the perpetuation of the ugliness and palsy and hopelessness of a billion others, unknown to them and unthought of who they would pity if they could but see: and he plucks his shamefaced head from the mud with a pok! as his companions laugh and one hands him his rifle which went flying when he tripped: and the tall old man with weak eyes and a frail body handed down a book from the packed shelves, found purely and instantly by memory, The Critique of Pure Reason: and in a Soho loft an artist stares at his latest creation, a splay-legged painting of a naked woman who cups her breasts in her hands and stares at the observer with seductive eyes and he marvels at her well-painted cunt, exceptionally glossy and moist-looking and he wonders how women have been condemned to walk the earth slashed and open to the serpentine and slithery spirits of air and earth and what terrors that must have held for primitive women, facing each instant of their day monsters macabre and invisible and how they must have defended their bodies against unwanted intrusion with dildos carved of bone or ivory and maybe belts made of skin, chastity belts...: and the man in black crouches upon a roof waiting, and he sees lights like tiny night eyes glaring at him from hidden impossible niches, and he burns his fingers against a hot wire that startles him from his reverie and soon the roof blazes and he is gone: and a woman muses over a piano in a floral drawing room, her eyes intent upon the keys, her tapering fingers resting in her lap and she knows that she is the price of her serene existence, that she must pay at others' whims with the hidden places of her body for those moments at the piano and those hours at the club, and at last she sees that even the hidden recesses of her mind have been violated and that she has lost herself irrevocably, more irrevocably than a mere burst hymen and the piano keys swirl in the tears of her eyes: and a student of life stares out from the park upon the river and searched within the chop and swell of the waves for a rhythm, a secret pulse of this planet, wherein the ills of this world can be diagnosed and set aright, and he stares

for minutes, then hours and the dogs romp around him and the lovers walk slowly past him, their eyes locked into each other's souls: and a man sprawls upon the ground, beaten and bloody, and his mind, with surprising calm, studies the intensity of the colors that swirl before him, swirl in unison with the throbbing of his head, and the muggers are long gone as his dead eyes begin to dry and crust, wide with the whirling visions of colors and swirling raucous patterns: and a man lurks upon the roof at night, raising binoculars to ~~A~~ Cassiopeia and marvelling at the ~~extra~~ invisible stars that appear, then he looks over a ledge into her window and watches as she finishes her typing and lays aside her cup of tea and her notes then casually drops her jeans, then her T-shirt and her full breasts with fat dark nipples jiggle free and she slips out of her floral panties and casually sniffs them, then throws them into the pile of wash, and she leaves her room to pee and comes back to lay naked through the moondrenched night but her light goes out and he is banished from her reveries: and a musician, a drummer, sits at his drums in the sub-basement of a building eerie with limestone walls that sweat as he sweats and he picks out rhythms from the vibrations of the night, attuned to the throb and swell of his muscular arms and fingers and the pulsations of the ^Ninconstant moon, reaching him even through ether, and miles, and granite, and limestone, and the moonlight sweats into his mind and his blood and he seeks with the tattoo of his drums the divine entelechy, the structural rhythm he read about somewhere but feels most surely in his seeking heart: and grey masses of clouds chill the foul waters ~~and~~ ^{and} the fisherman throw their garbage overboard, coffee cups and cigarette packs and mucous, and great hawking seagulls follow the stern, gaping and flapping for the fish guts, mashed and bloody, that ~~eventually~~ ~~will~~ spot the water with thick red and grease: and a child stares at the kite whipping so far above his head and at his father, the man whose face is so much higher than his own: and a dog pisses on a tire, and its scent is obliterated by another dog shortly afterward, and then another, and on and on: and

a flaming queen glides down the stairs to Bethesda fountain, a silver cape flamboyantly swishing in the wind, and he calls out with flaccid lisping tongue to his friends with the baby-names, and they coo to him in return, and the sun sparkles off his polished and painted nails: and a poet struggles with an ancient form, for discipline he says like a Druid but really he flees the liberation of his soul which would spill into realms obscene and mystical and too much himself so he plods on in ottavo rima or the Spenserian or even cantos of medieval alliterative verse because, of course, the form is all, it is the form that molds excess into art: and a father faces his wayward son armed with all the platitudes that custom has made plausible, but in the final instant before he speaks his lips quiver ^{and} ~~and~~ he pulls his son to him in gushing communion and they grapple with each other, squeezing heart into heart, and the platitudes dissolve into the silence of withheld weeping and caresses: and an old man lies upon his deathbed in a dreary room in a dreary hotel and he muses upon his youth and what was the asymptote that he could not bridge, ~~and~~ that flipped his parabolic burgeoning toward life over into that long descent toward death, and the final word on his old, cracked lips was courage courage repeated many times: and they huddled in the synagogue telling their past sorrows in songs that were moans and dirges and they refused to reconcile an era of prosperity with the ages of suffering that made them wanderers upon the face of the earth, and each one knew the transitory spell of blessing and looked only to the holy scroll before them for permanence and eternal truth, not even into each other's eyes for the words of god still hot from the divine press of his finger: and she stared at the class and at the faces anxious to be shown some flickering vision to legitimize this life's chaos, and her well-chosen words failed her and she almost spilled the truth, but she drew herself up into herself and carried on with the words that her dry mouth insisted were lies, all lies, or worse than lies, inconsequential, bits of moth-wing drifting through the night on tepid air to be lost forever in darkness: and a little boy dreams

of Peter Pan and is strangely haunted by Wendy in her nightgown and he climbs the tall pine trees that encircle his school preparatory to flying: and a man with a square face and sharp eyes, an old man though vigorous as a bull with his cheeks and forehead deeply engrafted with lines of passion and anxiety sits upon the edge of his small bed in the fleabag President Hotel in ~~the~~ ^{the} early morning hours, unable to sleep, seeing the desperate faces of his victims screaming out to him, in terror, in reproach, faces from his past when he carried a gun for the mob, when all of his male friends were dead by the age of twenty and he rubs his hard jaw with a steady hand and tries to shake the stubborn faces from his mind's eye: and the old men gather in front of the closed circuit TV screen at the clubhouse and watch the race and their legs and hands shake, palsied with excitement and desperation, and a few scattered in the crowd pop nitroglycerine tablets into their mouths as the horses reach the far turn: and a young man, fled for a few precious days from the rebellion, returns to his family's home and frolics with his younger brother, grown tall and handsome, and he picks him up and spins him around and they hug and kiss and cherish these moments together before he must leave and endanger his family no longer: and the mad man with leaf clusters on his shoulders enters the control room with his stiff yet fawning entourage and watches the video map glowing on the huge screen at the far end of the room, with blue and red and green points of light flickering on it, and his lunatic face glows pale in the light of the screen, ~~this Caligula~~ ^{this Caligula}, this mad Commodus: and a black radical is led surreptitiously into an ornate dining room at a famous restaurant and engages in the darkness, darkness almost as dark as his skin, in a hushed conversation with a few high-ranking feds and immense sums of money pass over the table and the black nods agreeably and is soon hustled out into the street to disappear in the Seventh Avenue crowd: and a prominent director is hustled out of an off-Broadway theater loft by police, none too gently, who have discovered him channeling the enormous profits from an insipid and successful

broadway musical into this radical^C underground production that condemns the
 government's avowed fascism and supports the rebels hiding throughout the
 nation, and the director raises a defiant fist in the face of his enemies
 before he is shoved into the back seat of a squad car: and a frail amateur
 radio buff living ~~as a non-entity~~ out in the flatlands picks up strange signals
 emanating from a portion of the night sky toward which a heavy crow had twisted
 his antenna just a few hours before: and an aging Lesbian stares at the ice
 in her glass of Scotch and thinks back upon her lost love and her lost art
 and the dreams of creamy sophistication and with that filled her rebellious^B
 youth, and the mellow strains of Bobby Short float in the background of her
 thoughts and she sets her drink down, untasted, and picks up her light blue
 flair and a pad of blank white paper: and the wall of a bank breaches in the
 night with a raucous explosion and cowled figures with submachine guns swarm
 all over it and the vault is emptied and the figures disperse into the night
 before the first squad car arrives howling^W from the side of the sea: and a
 young Jew, hearing within his pounding blood the cry of ancient fathers, packs
 a single duffle bag for an^a ~~endless~~ journey to the holy land, drawn by his blood
 from the crying need of the new world to the immortal whimper of the ancient
 home of God: and weeping relatives surround the ornate coffin of the deceased
 patriarch of the family, a coffin he specifically renounced in life, and, to
 the strains of morbid music piped in from a dingy basement, they weep for the
 past and some there are who plot against the future: and the spring sun burns
 away the morning sea fog and an acolyte kneels naked on the rocks by the sea,
 her body tanned, muscular, intensely vibrant and beautiful, and then she rises
 from her whispered prayers to Mithra, ancient sun-god, and glories in her
 nakedness beneath the warmth of his golden fingers: and in a cubicle sprayed
 with livid white light, a student puzzles over ancient literature, harkens
 to the whispers of men in toga and chiton and marvels at the beauty of the
 swirling letters and the pure, belltones of the ancient sounds, though she

know~~s~~ that we interpret the sounds according to our own dark lights and can
 never really know how the limpid syllables played upon human lips: and a tired
 man looks up from his stamp collection to cock his ear at the radio which blurts
 out in absurd jubilant accents the return of that Korean son of god to this
 nation torn by bitter civil strife and he aquints acidly at the radio when
 it assures him that the Korean Messiah brings the answer to all our problems:
 and delicate tree limbs bend beneath her skilled fingers as she wires the bonsai
 maple into the configuration most pleasing ~~to her~~ and then adds the pot to
 her collection and steps back to admire the miniature landscape decorated
 with porcelain figurines of serene old men meditating near tiny temples that
 sparkle blue, green, and gold beneath the artificial lights: and the skinny
 Puerto Rican wags his adam's-apple as he shrieks his delight in the wrestling
 arena as the fat Puerto Rican in tight black trunks with his hair greased and
 tied behind him in an oily ponytail slams the fat Anglo with the platinum
 hair down heavily onto the mat, ~~although he does not notice that the resounding~~
~~crash is sounded not by his death-dealing right foot but by the left foot behind~~
 and he screams joyful obscenities to his hero and in a final gesture of exhilar-
 ation throws his popcorn on somebody's head: and a somber group of men gather
 within a sub⁰basement rented for ~~amere~~ fifty dollars a month and set up the
 camera equipment necessary to film the torture and ultimate mutilation of the
 kidnapped runaway found at the Port Authority and brought to these dank silent
 soundproof quarters for the filming: and a gentle male orderly stops on his
 way off work in the pediatric ward to throw a rubber ball to a mongoloid infant
 girl and she gurgles her mindless pleasure and brightens up when she sees him
 enter and flashes him an angelic infant's smile from her warped head and twisted
 face: and two older couples flee the monotony of their daily lives to meet
 young and virile lovers and vicariously thrill to their potent lusts and
 flirtations and perhaps by some fluke of dark lightning ^{being} such a young couple
 home with them and leech their youth like risen vampires, their cheeks smeared
 with fresh blood: and a detachment of patriots breaks ^K into an abandoned house

near the site of the soon-to-be constructed dam and stand aghast at the bizarre
 spectacle of a mound of thousands of dead bees, dead in that one corner of
 the house for no apparent reason: and an immense bearded Turk in the uniform
 of a National Federalist Corpsman engaged in mortal combat with a rebel he
 stumbled upon in the darkness, a small man but muscled like a panther, and
 the big fellow was sent to the devil with his booming laugh still rattling
 in his throat: and a slim, well-tonsured teacher faced his class under the
 observant eye of a government censor and convinced himself that the intellectual
 pursuit of truth should be conducted entirely in realms ethereal and he could
 therefore wholeheartedly embrace the governmental demand that history and ethics
 be taught according to official lights, and therefore any doctrine that rocked
 the boat was neither intellectual nor healthy, and after class he roared with
 laughter at the bold lies he had vomited to the children but he could not stop
 that infernal tic in his left cheek that might betray him someday: and demons
 with hairy green wasp-eyes fluttered around the thrashing young man gone mad
 in the park and plucked at his flesh with vicious talons, and whispered inflam-
 matory lies in his ears in ancient Syriac and Abyssinian: and a young poet
 on a rooftop bathed in the light of the full moon perceived not the rotund
 face nor the man bearing sticks but the nymph's profile, the spirit of the
 moon, and rushed to set his pen to paper: and seven rainbow girls danced in a
 circle around a fallen patriot and he saw them turn his ~~aura~~ into vaporous
 solidity and he joined their wild dance among the stars becoming a new wave-
 length or pulsation among the many emanations of Sirius: and a squad car manned
 by drunken cops careened off the front wall of an apartment house, its lights
 flashing blue and white and red, its siren wailing like a dog in constant pain,
 and caromed off a tree into a knot of passersby who scrambled for safety but
 were too late: and the asylum inmates rose against their guards armed only
 with their sundry palsies and intent eyes and overran the asylum, slaying all
 who got in their way and spilled out onto the grounds, drifting into the night,

a telephone receiver dangling from the asylum wall calling hello-hello-hello:
 and an old bag woman with scabby handaged legs wanders over to a picket-line
 in front of a restaurant and pisses on the irate manager's shoe: and a boy
 who thinks he can find love in the arms of a woman without a body curries
 favor with her frigid eyes like a fawning dog and hands over to her gifts of
 great price which she absorbs and returns nothing: and a rebel sits in a field
 deep in thought and his thoughts churn the black ignorance deep down in his
 soul and he probes that ignorance, tests its depth and viscosity, and understands
 at last that a lifetime must be spent in dissipelling mists, that one does^e not
 reach a point of wisdom and then coast: and the dead, the dying, and the unborn
 form a Pythagorean union among the stars, a rose some say, or a tetra^Hhedron
 of immense purgative properties culled from accumulated ether and vacuum: and
 an alchemist slips upon the middle finger of his right hand a gold ring embedded
 with a huge sapphire which grants him the power to walk among earthly beings
 invisibly and pry into their secret hearts: and a desperate captive, his balls
 clasped in a testicle crusher worked with a screw, swears he will tell all
 but is unaware that his tormentors know he has nothing important to offer them
 and continue his torture for the sheer fun of it: and a saintly man of middle
 age finds solace from a frigid wife in the heated lust of an illicit though
 eminently therapeutic love affair with a lonely passionate woman: and a rapt
 opera-buff, stirred by the passion of Siegfried as he forges the invincible
 Nothung hurries home to share his^{V.S} ~~visions~~ with a wife looped on martinis: ~~and~~
~~the bare white walls of his chic, impotent apartment.~~ and a young executive
 decides to flee this drab world where even his mistress is boring by plunging
 off the Brooklyn Bridge into the river and in order to defeat the cursed bouyance
 of human flesh he shackles himself to a metal plate and tosses that over the
 edge first, his leg following quickly after: and people tired by lustreless,
 dehumanizing jobs and the incessant news of further outbreaks of rebellion
 and further martial restrictions upon ~~their~~^{their} personal lives, the curfews and

the vulnerability of pretty women and male homosexuals to unwarranted police harassment and the censorship of books and clubs and official disapproval of the stimulating effects of disco-mania and the incessant surge of adrenalin in their bodies and their unrelenting resignation to the morbidity of their lives ~~so they~~ wander into the jazz lounge to huddle together in mellow darkness and the sweating black artists, aging, their eyes filled with the twilight of years, they who have seen and lived through so much, they wail out slow blues, that music which tremulates lamentation, blues that is a psalm, or a spiritual, or a lover's lament, or a slave's anguish in a field somewhere bending beneath the broiling sun, and the tired people converse with their eyes, or in soft muted tones, and the bass throbs through them, they can feel the music more tactilely than they feel the clothes on their backs, and the fat saxophonist sweats under the hot lights his head bald, black, and gleaming, wrinkling with the strain of each blow on his sax, and the drummer's eyes are closed in contemplation of the rhythm that fills the small room, and the electric piano tinkles without the frenzy of the virtuoso ^{but with} ~~but~~ the quiet communal mellowness that links all the strands and tides of sound together into one coherent whole: and a troop of off-duty feds barge into a burlesque without caring to maintain the pretense that they are something more than the barbarians they appear and, having already gotten drunk, they take over the place, abusing the harmless old men who at first try to pacify them with comradely smiles and leers but who soon are forced to flee because one ^{of} ~~of~~ their number is pummeled onstage, beneath the gaudy lights and to the erotic rhythms of stripper's music, and there is blood all over and those girls who wish to remain and turn tricks dance for the drunks, leaving platform heel prints in an old man's puddle of blood: and a friendly cop cruises his accustomed precinct and sees friends flee from him and his heart grows weary and he is ashamed of his uniform and of all the trappings of his office but the advantages are so great so he drives along in silence: and a knot of political prisoners, former teachers, writers,

politicians, are herded from the yard at ^Dannemora into a rear gallery where
 they are kept in separate cells for interrogation and their one solace, com-
 munion with each other and intellectual dissussion, is lost to them in the
 darkness add mildew of their solitary confinement: and a young man speaks to
 his lover about commitment and she stares into his eyes ^{as} ~~at~~ his words, which
 cast the gauntlet against repression, drift around her and igniter her love while
 stifling her protests, her thoughts of his death or capture and torture, and
 the words drift into the furthest corner of her mind, meaningless, eloquent,
 and all she feels is a great love swelling her breasts and loins and she wants
 to cling to him in this mystic solitude forever: and a city boy, too soon a
 man, with the curls of Hyacinthus ^{am} ~~from~~ his head, stares into the moist eyes
 of a cow he has suddenly come upon in his march through the farmland and the
 massive beast twitches nervously at his nearness and he marvels at its size
 and smell and is ~~is~~ ashamed at the terror that fills him for this simple ^H ~~harmless~~
 cow and the nasty flies buzz noisily around the shit smears on its tail and
 he goes boo! and the cumbrous beast lumbers off in wide-eyed ~~f~~righ and he
 laughs and laughs and laughs: and a young couple touring the mountains stop
 in at a garage sale and agree upon the beauty of an old blue bottle crackled
 with age and impurities that cause the sunlight much chagrin as it is buffeted
 from fault to facet to face but the final result is an object of mellow beauty
 for which the couple gladly pays two bits: and the young people plunge naked
 into the lake ^K ~~de~~, hidden by sheer desolation and the inviolable serenity of this
 lost forest, and they frolic like children yet they clandestinely stare at
 each other's body trying to act nonchalant but the bobbling breasts and nipples
 taut from the cool water turn the men into subtle ^T ~~beasts~~, and the stiffening
 cocks arouse in the women pleasant confirmation of their beauty and sexuality
 and soon there is an orgy in the woods, human limbs sprawled over their fallen
 vegetable cousins and a chorus of panting and sighing and the lascivious sucking
 of air joins the already noisy gabble of birds: and with vibrating engraver

in hand he stares at the few precise marks he has ~~etched~~^{scord} into the lucite slab
 and he angles his eyes for the proper refraction of light and ~~etches~~^{scores} another
 line, attempting ultimately to capture within the crystal lucite a colloquy
 of planets on their journey to their place of spawning at the center of the
 universe: and a wild bachelor party finds the bridegroom sprawled naked beneath
 the wanton, skilled hands of three call-girls while his friends watch, laughing
 and rubbing their cocks, and those girls do to him what he never imagin~~d~~
 could be done and they finally leave him limp, drained, and absolutely useless
 for the honeymoon: and an old man seated on a bench in the center of Broadway
 picks at his fingers and wonders how a prophet distinguishes the voice of God
 from just having a good idea on his own: and two ladies stare out at Manhattan
 from the belltower of Riverside Church and they stare longest at the sunken
 cesspool of Harlem, longer than^N at the brilliant sun glinting on the chop
 and swe~~el~~ of the Hudson, because they are fascinated by the physical manifestation
 of human misery, sin, and degradation and are reassured as to the sanctity
 of their own homes and well-scrubbed persons: and a child is told by his teacher
 to glue the little bits of colored glass to the paper to make a design but
 he finds it more beautiful to take one piece and hold it up to the sun and
 see the fiery shine so he sits and examinds each smooth jewel in his small
 hands, his heart beating mightily: and the musicians play for coins in front
 of the Metropolitan, a brass quintet that fills the wide sidewalk with beautiful
 Baroque fugues: and a nursing mother with long black hair and wide dark eyes
 is embraced by a lover who shields her from the solitude she bears with her
 husband and he strokes her voluptuous body with his tongue and massages her
 clitoris with his tongue and wanton milk spurts from her nipples and dribbles
 slowly along her breasts in the fury of her passion: and two warriors in woolen
 tunics with shoulder-length hair and flashing eyes pushed away from the long
 oaken dining board and assumed their position in the warrior's pit where they
 hurled their bulging iron bodies against each other, locked in mortal combat:

and out from a fissure in the earth emerged a humanoid earth-spawn trailing its umbilical cord over its shoulder as it lurched through the forest to feed, ~~though~~ ^{to} shortly it would sever the cord with its own strong teeth: and a woman pulled her husband closer as she strained to give birth amidst ~~capitalized~~ ^{as} implements of stainless steel while another woman waits in a cone of light, swollen and pregnant, waiting for her husband to return and make good somehow her lost youth: and even the feds felt there was something majestic ^{and dangerous} about the scenario they were creating ~~that was detrimental to them~~ as they hoisted one of the captured rebels naked to the top of a high pole by his lashed wrists where he was to hang without mercy from the elements until he was dead ~~and~~ ^{and} one of them looking at his classic muscular body and flowing hair thought of how this martyrdom would look on canvas five hundred years hence when that rebel would be made a saint or hero and he would join Pilate and all the unwitting others banished by a future generation to the darkest ^{pit} of Hell: and the sorceress stared into a mirror and held a flickering candle beneath her chin so that she could contemplate her astral self revealed in the sharp ridges and shadows created by the candlelight and her eyes sparkled like a beast's, two whirling points of light that flickered in the darkness: and the pudgy secretary passed her full length mirror and squeezed the flesh on the back of her thighs to pucker her cellulite and, after shrugging disgustedly, turned to put on her make-up: and the colored maid walked an airedale in Carl Schurz park and stared at the convoluted turd as it ^s welled out of the distended anus and flopped with a plop to the grass, steam rising from it in the nippy morning air: and in a penthouse far above the city a wealthy masochist served his dominatrix well-cinched in a leather corset with a frilly apron hung about his waist and with a French maid's cap pinned to his balding scalp and she made him remove her slipper with the five-inch spike heel and hold it beneath her cunt as she squatted and filled it to overflowing with hot urine and bid him cheers! ~~and drink~~ ^{drink} and he ~~did so~~ with gusto and mute admiration for her

lordliness and majesty: and drenched with sweat the athlete dropped the dumbbell on the carpeted floor of the gym and contemplated the swelling veins of his forearm, wondering if his mind ^{also} ~~too~~ derived sustenance from the sustained nurturing of his physique for he believed like ancient Druids in the unalterable interdependence of body and soul or intellect, the divine afflatus within each of us, though of course he knew nothing of their pantheistic trees: and the rich boy entered the perfumed garden hung with sparkling boughs weighed down with ripe fruit to be ^Harvested, and he laid himself full length in the thick softness of grass and a nude serving maid brought him a ^Hookah filled with smoking narcotic herbs filtered through fine wine which he imbibed deeply, and the birds of the perfumed garden lulled his brain with sweet song and red plumes fluttered down upon his eyes and stomach and ^{nude} slaves stroked his nakedness with soft swift palpations and one girl ~~even~~ ^Began to suck his cock: and before squatting she moistened the plexiglas dildo with K-Y jelly and surveyed its slender length and shiny and turquoise under the hot lights and she spread her lips and after a few tentative thrusts it was up and she could pull it in and out and feel the warmth of her arousal swell all throughout her body: and a dragon was seen in the night sky, a redistribution of suns and planets and a flaming nova was its eye and its eye gleamed majestic white for seven nights and for seven nights it glowered red and fierce ^C and the children of earth sought solace in proximity and numbers, learning anew that each was soft and warm, and they huddled together awaiting the revelation of the mysteries of the final days: and she raised her brittle fist against the irrevocability of her loneliness, her life unfulfilled, and refused to court the demon Pazuzu on his own battlefield but ^would insist that he seek her out and either destroy her completely or leave her in peace: and a wizened lapidary thumbed a glossy carnelian testing its smoothness as he held it between his fingers to determine its dimensions: and the shaggy poet pondered words, his chosen medium, and elicited from them a compromise in which he would acknowledge their insufficiency

as a medium of direct perception and communication of insubstantial thought
 if they would in turn provide him with the framework of metaphor and symbol
 that would carry the perceptive souls of readers into wordless, soulless
 dimensions of pure wonder and revelation, akin to faith: and Mondo the butcher
 slapped a hunk of beef onto the chopping block and with a certain swipe of
 his cleaver rent its unity into duality, a duality stained with rich fresh
 blood, and he bound the two pieces in unwaxed ^{brown} paper, his bald head and heavy
 eyes supremely satisfied: and floods of water burst from the fountain, through
 cracks and clefts the water vanquished the stone and mortar, and she bathed
 her flowing raven hair, raven unto dark blue in the full moonlight, and her
 eyes sparkled like her wet naked skin, moist, saturated, and she shook the
 crystal stream into her face splashing gaily and felt her taut chill nipples
 with four inquisitive fingertips: and a plastic bust of Shakespeare, heedless
 of the contemplative Socrates beside it which was likewise heedless of Shakespeare
 and lost in thought stared into a shamefaced ^vacuum sending out vibrations
 of pure inspiration from its bald plastic pate: and an adolescent girl, consumed
 by fresh lust ponders the musk in the swirling sea breeze of night and desires
 reconciliation with herself as she would be, with herself as she must be, and
 with the world as it mysteriously is: and the vanity of triumph so overwhelms
 the wrestler that he falls naked and humble to his knees in the grotto that
 had witnessed his brutal ^{victory} triumph and begs the gods to forgive his pride with
 weeping eyes: and a small dapper man with the lightest blue eyes stares fixedly
 at the role of the dice, aware that his taut expectation is but a strand of
 an ineluctable continuum that includes all time, all of the past and the future,
 all that is virtuous as well as evil, all that is predicated upon thought and
 all that is predicated upon instinct: and in the still night of the moon an
 aged scholar, dead within, disturbs the soul of a great poet seeking intimate
 knowledge of his art, willing to torment his shade with incomprehensible agonies
 so that he may shatter his grey crust and enjoy one final earthly triumph so

his great vanity may rest easy upon his death: and the tiny spirits that animate the inanimate, the waters ~~and~~^{and} stones and arched fronds and the shadows of living creatures emerge from their hidden solitude into the daylight of the untutored eye and they whirl in a crescendo of merriment, spinning the universe out into ~~whiplashed~~^{whiplashed} tendrils that curl out before astonished, vacant eyes until they fling their rainbows and crystals out to the farthest possible limits, embracing their origin, having traversed the longest distance between two points which is no line at all: and the phantasmagoric spectacle ceases, asweat.

* * *

He came to ~~me~~^{me} and asked if I wept for myself or for the civilization that crumbled around me. The suddenness of his question triggered my intellect and my tears were stemmed with thought: for myself, I answered. He smiled. Civilizations follow a grand and mysterious progress of which we are but witless bystanders: tears are too precious, too intimate to be wasted on the majestic and obscure. Let them purge your heart of pain, let the pain mingle with the bitter salt in your tears and be free of your debt to your soul. We are never free of our debt to the process of civilization, we can never be. And he moved out into shadows, probably plotting another mission ^For another night, and a bat squeaked harshly above his head and I turned my eyes to my hands. They clenched and sundered in my lap and I drifted toward sleep with the certainty that I was on the threshold of great things, great things that would happen inside me and transform me without even the merest whisper of a sound, as silently as thought, from a mortal to an immortal spirit, a somehow thing of electricity and ambrosia. O this wondrous night! The blades ~~of~~^{of} dreams wave on and on, an endless sea before my eyes, mystical and eternal as death or love ^{or} the wild wheeling stars. Selene, you have brought me before the poetry of night: you have banished the illusory truth of the sun that hides your image from my eyes and stood naked before me, you night of burning dreams. I robe myself in moonblue velvet and avert my face from your gleam, the all-destroying gleam of your smile. I have worshipped you, but in glances and moments swollen with passion for that is all I could bear. What? This night I shall stare directly into your burning eyes, your gleaming mouth? It cannot be. To do so is death: I know from the ancient sages, the lovers who have passed before me. But this night shall be different from all others: I wonder. ~~But~~ I am bitter, Selene: our fleshy ^Fibre once tried and hardened on the forge of sorrow shatters still, and again and again, and each new ^Ft~~am~~pering falls victim to a new, more virulent anguish and is there no final hardness, no invulnerability, no end? There is an end: capitulation, resignation to mediocrity, or a plunge

into the finality of madness. Not for me. Because of the venom of your kiss
 I am not permitted the blindness of the masses, to delude myself into serenity,
 to not be pained in an instant by a lover's eye that is lustreless or a universe
 that wheels without me at its core. I cannot wash the moonglow clarity of
 my vision with the murky mortal waters that bathe my fellows. Your gift is
 a double-edged sword. I can thrill at the glory of the involuted cosmos by
 merely gazing at a blade of grass, or a floating bird, or at the lines of pores
 in my flesh. I can renounce "am" for "become" and forsake a single role in
 life to preserve the infinite potentiality that separates me from beasts. But
 there's a ~~price for freedom~~ ^{price for freedom,} always a bitter hidden price. I cannot feel like
 the others, I cannot shrug off pain and walk away from my despair. And the
 world parades before my soul whips and prods that other men don't feel,
 sensitivities to the very atoms that make flux of all things. We are tempered
 with sorrow, and crack, and are ~~hardened~~ ^{hardened} by the plunge into agony. And again,
 and again, and again. For me there is no end. Others may at last sink into
 the cold living death of heedless unconcern: a black inhuman frozen bitter
 grief that transforms flesh to stone. And the living linger for years, or
 decades, dead to the wash and flow of life, dead to love and sorrow, dead to
 the vortexed passion central to mortal life. Still others crack and splinter,
 their spirits whirled in wild fragments, their eyes plagued with mad visions,
 relentless, unredeeming, and they sit in quiet corners, sunk in catatonia,
 as upon a lost continent silent-sunk beneath green jelly seas, choked by squirm-
 ing anemones, picking at their skin or screaming their frenzy to heedless iron
 walls or babble mindless delight to nowhere, drooling and plucking invisible
 fruit from invisible trees. Others are resigned, and they play out their slow
 fate with proper smiles and proper frowns and drift slowly to oblivion to be
 absorbed in the great black holes of the universe, to be stripped of their
 very atoms and lost forever as even a simple memory. They are swallowed by
 the octopus of oblivion which I must flee. I feel pain that others cannot
 feel and I know my isolation from common men. Surely others ache as much as

I and thrill ^{As} much with joy but their passions fade into the darkness of subconsciousness, their cause for sorrow flickers but in dreams that mystify or amuse them the next morning over toast and tea. I bend beneath their ~~un-~~conscious pains and those that commonly slip past into the mind's darkness: there is the curse of your venomous kiss, my clear eyes that see the nuances of the universe, that exult where others but stare, and that weep where others shrug. When I crack ^N and harden why cannot that be the end? As there is no limit to my strength so there is no limit to the tidal flow of anguish that seeks to swamp me. I sail upon the flow and flood of nightblack seas ~~and my~~ and my lunar eyes see shapes and shoals unseen by other men: I navigate these waters with my vision, but to what end? Is there a final affirmation toward which I am cautiously, heroically picking my way? Or will my livid flame, though bright with rainbow visions, flicker and ^{be} snuffed like all the rest? Selene, have you taken me as lover and filled me with infinite joy and pain but to torment my mortal flesh, to make me twitch between extremes that others cannot bear the whole of my brief life ^{only to} ~~and then~~ abandon me to the same void and darkness as they? I have renounced all single roles for the fulfillment of infinite possibilities. I am contradictions, I am negations, I am affirmations. But among all my thousand selves there is no reconciliation, no equanimity with the mad flux of life. What were Alexander ^{and} ~~or~~ Napoleon but the fictions of heroic ages demanding substantial expression of themselves: I am of a bourgeois age, an unheroic age, an age that will produce nothing but petty tyrants, pandering to cheap dreams, an age that knows not freedom nor understands the magnitude of suffering and triumph. Where is my place in such an age? I sink into my lover's arms for comfort, but soon the night passes and the brutal sun scorches my eyes with harsh reality. Sometimes I feel so irretrievably alone that death and the devil smile sweetly beckoning with outstretched gentle hands. I stand upon a stage in darkness without a script and there is no author to whom I can turn for guidance, no prompter with cues and signals, no taped

markings on the stage to indicate where I must place my feet^T. I wish not to be here on this dark stage, but neither do I wish to be elsewhere for I know of nowhere else. So I wait and at the prompting of my erring mortal soul pursue grand schemes, wage futile wars, dedicate myself to virtues and ideals of which I have no certain knowledge. I grope in the dark, conscious but of my chagrin and my hollow footsteps on the varnished wood. I am a small man in a small age. I am alone.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And the commentator on the modest tale stepped forward to field questions from his audience of demons and saints:

(The demon Behemoth, his serpentine trunk swinging past his hirsute paunch and flopping about his pendulous genitals) This lunatic poet. Why?

Because his soul sleeps with the night and his fancy attires itself in illusions that pluck comets from their very progress about the stars. He hears a voice reminding him of his brief mortality and he wishes to vanquish death. He wishes the demons to feast on a spirit drained of all substance by a full life, a life of adventure and daring and accomplishment. For this he attacks a symbol or metaphor as he attacks armories in the dark hours of the night. It is the moon, you see, that pulls at him like the restless ocean, filling him, deflating him, driving him toward a thousand desperate destinies at once. He is primal and magnificent, yet cognizant of dust and excrement and the tripe within him, and he listens to voices in his head.

(Placid and long-bearded, St. Anthony stares into space) Voices?

A thousand voices that pursue him relentlessly crying out Not Enough! They plague him with his ignorance. He knows not the ancient tongues nor the incantations that build ritual chambers or crystal castles nor the herbs and roots nor the lapidary's lore of mystic gems, gems that make one invisible or immune to wine or able to discern a lie, nor the language of birds and beasts nor the finger talk of the ollaves nor the trajectories of stars and planets

nor what the gossamer flesh of the universe's boundary really feels like nor
 the spell for casting lust or curses. So many things he does not know. Yet
 the voices acquaint him with their presence, tease him with their proximity
 and become still as he stiffens to listen. There is the voice of the first
 Messiah, an anthropoid savior who cured a million reptile spirits of their
 imprisonment within scales and bid them join him in the trees. Who restored
 gored and bloated corpses to life. Who led his tribe from mountain to valley
 in pursuit of wise game. Who stared at the moon in the night with overbright
 eyes. Who walked with death and conquered his fear and saw the first equanimity
 in the mechanism of the universe. Who was the first to teach of necessity
 and ideals. Who was the first to ascend the hidden mountain so his mortal
 remains should survive in the obscurity of legend and be revered. He shows
 his face to him in racial memory, apparently a dream. And there is he who
 traded fin for thumb, the first hammer-wielder, he who paced the boundaries
 of cities with a giant's tread and demarcated mine and thine and ours. Who
 foretold flood and famine and rescued a knot of believers from the dire future.
 Who mingled art with necessity in the works of his hands and raised his eyes
 from the mire of the instant, from the inevitability of decay, to the bequest
 of things long-lived to those who would follow him. Who forged fire and tools
 and machines and bewitched the sun and the rivers and the winds into working
 his will. Who sought to emulate the heavenly city upon earth, with high towers
 and ornate domes and mighty fortified walls. There is the melodious voice,
 he who weaves the stuff of sound into the fabric of the crystal spheres. Who
 parts the planets. Who lulls the brain. Who commands the mortar and straw
 to assemble and cities to rise of themselves. Who makes joyous the solitary
 night and somber the bright day of death. Who causes bodies to convulse.
 Who charms the serpent and griffon, the hurricane and tornado. Who mocks the
 deaf and immunizes the blind. Who bids rancor cease and peace to prevail.
 He fills his head with the wretched irony of perfection and sets him on an

endless road searching for the lost chord, the final affirmation, the ultimate harmony. And his music partakes of solid forms, rhomboids and lozenges and spheres and cubes and cones, which clatter and plock! together, plock! plock! plock! Plunk. Who, much to his chagrin, looks behind him. There are the growls of the iron men, the lion gods, the gods of thunder. Who walk^K the earth at the bidding of inferior others to temper their might with humility. Who wield the club and the hammer. Who pull down walls and cleave mountains. Their whisper is guttural, evoking visions of lumpy muscles and iron thighs and the flaming eyes of combat. They seek out prey and destroy it with their bare hands. Surefooted, they tumble the fleeing buck and wild boar. Their loins fertilize an infinity of wombs, stiff and broad and purple with throbbing hot blood. Their voices in lust: panting, basso profundo, and nymphs asweat, tinkle sighs, screams high pitched echoing, the rainbow bridge, the gravel of the Aegean, the sands of Judea. There is the voice of he who first awakened to the purr of beasts and called them forth from the jungle. Who first resolved to be, and suffered for his resolution. Who first gloried in solitude and then writhed in communion. Who first amalgamated God from the bits of bark and fruit and dung that fell before him. Who witnessed death and the fiery sword and the first mortal words of Satan. Unbidden, the world stretched before his wondering ignorance and he^F was destined to do as he would do. And the voice of the wizard of the mountain, incantations hurled through his brother's lips, his rod stretched before the oppressors to afford them access to the tangibility of his magic. The sorceror with a bronze body and white beard, who speaks as to a burning bush^B and anoints himself with flame, the voice heard amidst the unconsuming crackle and spit of fire. The lawgiver, a simple man beset by willful, arrogant children, his voice quavers now, old and weak, And the mocking voice, the imp, the boyish sprite, master of obscene wit, dropping his voice with his pants, a fundement depeint strewn across the milky way, a squeezer of nursing mothers' breast to write his name upon sand and tumble a

frolicsome lass with a slap to her ass and a pinch on her cheek and a vaginal
 tweak, so to speak. There is She, the voluptuous savior and ~~restorer~~ under
 ancient suns, who rescued the severed genitals and crowned herself with piety
 and devotion to her lord. Who spreads her thighs for the pleasure of all but
 mostly for herself, arched she is the sky and tempts the universal phallus
 to enter her and be shriven. And there is the wailing elf-woman, a trickle
 of blood dripping from the corner of her mouth, awash from the clouded skies
 of the Northlands, howling in the night. Who is the mother of the stolen,
 the transformed, the changelings. Who belies her power with her slowness,
 her tiny wings crystal and veined like gold wires. She howls in his head,
 the dark lady, the woman of death and injustice and insatiable passion, perverse.
 And there is the batwing whisper of Ba, the whisper behind the dream. Who
 is unheard, unfelt, unknown, but All nonetheless. Who is secret and silent,
 but the core of the bomb. Who lurks through night and a thousand passing suns.
 Who sees the sins and calls them back, the daughters of memory. Who yields
 to temptation, the daughters of mammary. And the fetters of time dissolve.
 And the fetters of space. Who flows with the photons of time and space, observed^{ant}
 of unity, conscious of the thousand dimensions of life, the thousands of thousands^{as} of
 planes of existence. And Ka, the astral projection, barking orders. To feel.
 To embrace. To feed. Who swells with fervor, iron and relentless. Who pulses
 a unique rhythm amidst the swirl and flux. Who flies from the abstract into
 the arms of the heroic. Who rises solemn and sweated on the field of battle
 and blood. Who curls as a foetus into a mote of desire and sparks into the
 bloodstream, arousing the loins and the liver, swelling the pineal eye of the
 mystic, flushing the spleen of the lunatic. The whisper of Ka is madness.
 He writhes beneath the dominion of Ka. He seeks to understand Ka, to reason
 with Him, to placate Him with labor and sacrifice. There is the voice of the
 magician. It trembles with chagrin. It bids him turn from this life of the
 mind and this world to the higher realities in the beyond, darker supernatural

forces. He speaks with glaring eyes beneath thick brows. Who calls forth allies out of tombs. Who conjures life out of bottles and comets to fall from the sky. Who befriends noblemen and kings and brings them victory in battle. And as his final days approach, he fears the Beast, the slouch of the stalking Beast. It growls or mumbles, inarticulate yet compelling. It is that voice he listens to the most. He fears it the most, for at the end of it all, behind the swirling facades of his humanity, there it lurks, unknowable, dark, glowering as the moon, implacable.

(The demon Ashtoreth, bat-winged, crowned, sodomizing a scaly serpentine dragon bearing Bob Dylan's face) And he would be a scholar. A wise man well-versed in the lore of the ancients as well as the ways of men. What would he know?

The marvels of science. The fascination of colored lights flashing meaningfully on the control panel of sophisticated machinery that can work miracles. A rainbow beam that heals all sickness. An anti-gravity sphere attaching to the belt buckle that bears the wearer wherever he would go, swiftly, silently, without pollution. An invisibility cloak and an atom-disperser that he may lurk as unobtrusively as a vapor into the bedrooms of pretty young women, pre-pubescent girls even, and watch them play with themselves. A plexiglass globe for space travel to marvel at the inconceivable vistas of other worlds. The artistry of a master thief to steal great jewels from the museum, diamonds blue and brown and rose and yellow, and to make off with tons of armaments for his people, and money in stacks from the Federal Reserve banks. Twenty-six languages, ancient and modern, to commune with the great thinkers of all times and nations. How to play all musical instruments like a sensitive virtuoso. ~~And even~~ To read music, to sit on the subway and read a symphonic score like a book. The incantations of the warlocks and witches. He would captivate random women with lust spells, making them his immediate and total slaves, eager to yield him their secret bodies and passions for him to work his gentle

will. The Critique of Pure Reason. Finnegans Wake. The lore of the woods, knowledge of all herbs and healing balms, back to the simple survival life-style of ancient ancestors who roamed forests, and slept in caves. Sexual expertise to flood even the most frigid woman with successive orgasms that leave her drained and wilted, saturated with pleasure. The visage of God. The reality beyond the illusions of the senses. Other epochs, to see their common lives, see how they talked among themselves, waged wars for bloody tyrants, toiled under broiling suns for dog-faced gods. The real Socrates, and Alcibiades, and Alexander, and Caesar, and Helen of Troy and Cleopatra and Achilles and Herakles and Diomedes, the mortal who wounded Ares himself, and Odysseus and Moses and Samson and David and Akiba and Bar Kochba and De Sade and Shakespeare and Joyce and Mozart and Beethoven and Michelangelo and Da Vinci and Botticelli, and Botticelli's models. The quick and easy way to win a war against impossible odds. Who are friends and who are enemies. The wisdom of the dead. The voice of his father from beyond the grave. The Orphic mysteries and Eleusinian mysteries and the revels of the savage Bacchantes. The language of birds and beasts and fish and even insects. How to paint and sculpt and carve wood and build a house and shoot any weapon with a marksman's skill and etch in lucite and metal plates. To perform miracles.

(Adam, his face bearded and familiar, quizzical) Such as?

To undo all the evil that has been done and see if the universe can function in perfection.

(The demon Baal, triple-headed, the crowned head of a scowling Agnew, the head of a cat and a frog, all mounted on a tarantula's body, stiff with fur, bloated with poison) And sin. What of it?

Of sin he knows but what he can feel. He can prove nothing but will die if he must to wage battle against it. Proof through commitment. Perhaps his life validates virtue. Perhaps without him and many dreaming others neither sin nor virtue would exist. Sin is not to him what it is to others.

(St. Andrea, arrayed in black, weeping) He betrayed me.

The primal sin, at least one in every life, for which we are eternally penitent. Usually committed in our ~~past~~ ^{youth}, it casts tentacles of guilt into our every thought, our every creative act. It is what he tried to undo but could not. It is what he wishes to do again with more finesse, less pain, an amicable separation. It is what he wishes he could will out of existence, and recapture lost years, and dwell in love again. Still, the end would be the same.

(Sancta Mater, arrayed in a blue flowing robe, fat, resigned, emphatic)

And me?

The act of generation and birth is purely biological. It holds no moral or ~~ethical~~ ^{ethical} demands for him. At the age of reason he saw. His childhood vanished in a mass of shattered illusions. Seeing is an act of great pain. He did as he must or you would have consumed him, swallowed his humanity, thrust him back in the womb.

(St. Virgo, ten years old, long blonde hair, big eyes, foxy, robed in gossamer white) He had designs upon my virtue.

He fixated in his youth upon young female friends, tormented by precocious sexuality, unable to complete sexual union since he didn't even know what it was. He wishes ~~but~~ to correct the errors of the past. To see how different it feels. To see if a child moans with pleasure differently than a grown woman. To see how she slides onto his cock with her feather weight. To see. Not, I repeat not, to corrupt innocence.

(The demon Belphegor, horned, constipatedly straining on a close-stool) And his work? What has he brought out of himself but chaos and frustration? It's clear to me he's a fraud.

Sloth, born of cowardice and insecurity, sits like a demon on his back. Vague fears, frequent depressions, humility carried unto timorousness. He has fought this, often successfully. He has created works of art. He has

led his people in battle. He is toppling a corrupt social order. Slothful, he has done much. More than men of furious though pointless bursts of energy. And he has loved. He has been redeemed by love. There is still much more of the tale to go. We shall see.

(St. Jacquelyn Ann, crowned with a diadem of gold which gleams with precious gems, robed in flowing, glowing lavender, her hair curled and golden, her beatific face beautiful, her body rapturous) Me. He loves me. And I love him.

Beyond the agony of battle and wound, beyond the evil that pervades the universe, beyond surprise and disappointment and harsh words and all the thousand toils of tears, that truth is the foundation beneath his reality, his bridge above the flux and flood of life. A breath of Selene, warmed by mortality.

(The demon Eurynome, Jew-faced, amazed, with a voracious mouth) And he believes himself to be the new Messiah! The new Christ! Say it isn't so now. Try and deny it. The absurd, dissipated fool.

He has been both intellectually and emotionally intrigued by the concept of Messiahship since he learned from his mother that as a Levite and first-born son he was eligible to be prince of the people. Although his status was somewhat confused by a previous marriage and the miscarriage of three male foetuses, the idea left its mark. He has that within him to sacrifice himself for the welfare of others: not needlessly nor foolishly nor gladly but willingly if necessity or fate should so demand it. He is puzzled by the question of Fatherhood. He feels no mystical compulsion toward it himself: indeed, he has scrupulously avoided it wherever possible. No generations are to be expected from his loins, active those those loins ^{may} ~~my~~ be. He enjoyed an ideal consubstantial father who was however lost to him at an ~~an~~ particularly tender age. Thus, he was deprived of a great store of worldly experience to draw from as well as a modicum of ~~substantial~~ ^{rather shaky} financial security. On the other hand, the memories remain boyish and unsullied by possible rifts developing between him and his father as so often happens due to advancing senile irritability on the part of the

father, or a resentment of the usurpation of the superior role by the son; or the wild readiness natural to an eager son to try wings still fuzzed and unready for flight. He has ceaselessly engaged in a search for a transubstantial father. Out of loneliness. Out of a profound sense of loss. The sleek, massive muscles he has developed are an acknowledgement of his imagined descent from Herakles as he pursued his amorous adventures among the sloe-eyed women of the ancient Aegean. His early interest in philosophy stems from his assumption of the pug-nosed Socrates as a transubstantial father, always admiring his barefoot stance in the savage snows of Greece as a warrior, and highly indignant about his unjust execution, an execution however which raised him from obscurity to eternal fame as Plato's adored mentor. ~~Had he not been killed, perhaps Plato, in his maturity, would have turned elsewhere for his model of Athenian wisdom.~~ His early interest in writing derives from his assumed sonship to Shakespeare, the ultimate product of a wild roll ⁱⁿ the hay with a common though beautiful serving wench from some country inn. This image has been of such favorable dimensions to him that he has fancied himself ~~to be~~ eminently Elizabethan, with a single ^{gold} ~~gold~~ earring in his left ear, and a brown cap with a yellow plume, and he has had an inordinate fancy for capes which he, alas, never wears. And as he grows older his fantasies mature, rather than diminish. As he learns of a new attribute he would possess, he adopts a new transubstantial father to give regal validity to its possession. He feels the obscurity of history and the inability of historians or theologians to say him nay makes the entire realm of history and myth the source for his fathers. He has a propensity for hero-worship, to wholly embrace those few individuals he admires, which also makes him humble and unwilling to admit to the possession of great talents of his own. You see, the poor man is a mass of contradictions. He has deemed it necessary to accept Moses and David and Jesus as his spiritual fathers because he is in the process of muddling out his relationship to God. He awaits the great leap when he will accept God, directly, and that will be

the end of all the transubstantial fathers, consumed within the flame of the One. He proceeds methodically, drawn by Reason and Emotion, toward that ultimate unity. Some may laugh at the naive crutch ~~he~~ employs, picking fathers just like that, if you will, but if the end is achieved there can be no argument about the means. At least for him. He recognizes, though somewhat unsurely, that sonship to such diverse and potent fathers implies great achievement and great sacrifice. Like other people, he really cannot conceive of his own death. But he can intellectually, if not emotionally, accept the sacrifice of his life in pursuit of his ideals. He falls short of Messiahship in his inability to believe that he will herald in a new age: he can accept a mission, a passion, but not a resurrection. He does not believe in the sudden teleological appearance of a Golden Age, an age of reward and punishment, an age to end all transitions. Rather he believes in the steady upward spiral of history, an endless process among which ~~no~~ ^{has} each ~~have~~ ^{god, godling,} equal right to assume transubstantial unity with any preceding ~~not~~ hero, or common man. When common ancestors are sought and shared, there will be peace. When opponents are embraced by sons seeking fathers, there will be faction and war.

(St. Marion and St. Anna, naked, voluptuous, their fingers playing with each other's cunt) And us?

Because of the uncertainty of his own relation to his mother, he has come to view women with great awe. He constantly seeks their assurance he is loved. This has led to what some have deemed an excessive sexuality on his part. He finds fascinating and arousing the various sexual diversions peculiar to women: masturbation with dildoes, lesbianism, rocking women warmed by Ben-Wah balls. He also shares an infantile fascination with their excretion and admits to particularly enjoying a film in which a pretty girl pisses and shits on a glass table top, filmed from beneath. Some would call this pornographic fascination ^{"perversion"} ~~"exploitation"~~: rather it is to be seen in his case as a quest, an investigation of elements toward which he is instinctively drawn that will all go

to the psychic construction of a single transubstantial mother. He has known goddesses: his human love, endowed by him with superhuman capacities to which she somehow amazingly always lives up; and Selene, the moon-goddess, an archetype of his own femininity, tender, brutal, evasive though compelling. He is a cavalier in an age when chivalry is dead, though he relishes a good session of B&D when a beautiful naked woman hangs from chains, open and vulnerable to his every whim. He won't abuse them: just masturbate them and fuck them to frenzy. As a leader in war he has made women Amazons. They serve as his right arm. As a legislator he does not patronize them with either special rights or special restrictions. And he has no end of admiration for their ability to endure ^{their monthly period,} ~~the monthly blood and mess of their bodies,~~ endurance of which he feels men would be incapable.

(The demon Amduscias, unicorn-headed, bearer of horns) Yahoo! He dares!

O that. Yes. Perfection is not to be sought among those of his species. Some hold it of greater virtue to be capable of sin and error and to still be moderately well-behaved than to be of a perfect nature and incapable of anything less than perfect virtue. A debatable point, surely. However, that evening with the child in the woods: you must understand first of all the years of pent-up wonder and desire, then his deep affection for the little darling who he often took out for piggy-back rides after a day's warfare. He saw no reason for universal chaos to cost the girl her entire childhood. And she was a foxy lass with big brown eyes and long lean legs. None of that pudgy baby fat that makes most children unappealing. And no one can ^{say} ~~say~~ that she was unaware of her attraction for him. Without prejudice one can certainly maintain that she wove her web with all the cunning innate to her sex. And, indeed, she had officially entered puberty about two months before with her first flow. Still, she was hairless down there, with just the barest knobs of breasts beneath nipples like a little boy's that were starting to crinkle and enlarge. And that third hairless orifice of which no more need be said

but that it held for him an overpowering attraction. It is true the things they did that night in the solitude of the forest are unconventional. If one were harsh and prone to judgmental labels one could label them perverse. However, the leap of mind that dares create a new world dares also to reevaluate the moral dictates grown outmoded with successive ages. The cult of virginity for instance, and monogamy: both are as outmoded as ancient dietary laws which once served to preserve the health of primitive desert tribes but are today nothing more than arid adherence to ritual. And there was love of a sort. That does count for something.

(Ss. Boanerges, running wild with paper crowns and wooden swords) Our souls he loves, the free movement we embody as we flit from island to island in the river of time heedless, of our motion, heedless of the flowing water, heedless of all but ecstasy. (They execute simultaneous, mirror-image leg-circles in a flower-strewn meadow) He loves our bright eyes irreverent before the gods. He loves our refusal to comprehend the senseless laws and traditions that dare give the lie to our inner voices, the murmur of our hearts. (They startle jack-rabbits from their lair beneath the briars and give gleeful battle) No subtleties for us please. No massive tomes of dogma and explication. (They somersault down a hill) We study the book of the heart and soul. We advocate the primitive virtues and find very little sinful. (They mutually masturbate) So we storm the nights with the wild wind of our passage and awaken the sleeping elders with our cries for we are young and our youth demands privileges that are denied to sapped and tired flesh. Let the old ones sink into their dark sties and leave us alone. (They stand at stiff attention, tongues out, thumb to nose) Are there not enough cliffs and buildings and elevator shafts and guns and deep swirling waters for suicide? Let them be used and frequently or else be silent and let us be.

There were those nights in his youth when his friends would gather together for music and flirtations, the boys with downy chins and flowing hair, the

girls with firm young breasts, their nipples taut against the thin fabric of T-shirts or halter tops, and their hair was soft upon their shoulders and they wore headbands and wove garlands of flowers in their hair. And they sat upon the grass near Silver Lake, talking and singing and holding each other close against the brief winds of the spring night. They were hated by the old ones for their splendor. The old ones could falsely justify their rage by pointing to the acrid, sweet smoke of joints; or condemn their refusal to admit reality into their idyllic paradise; or complain they sung too loud, or drove too loud, or talked too loud, or breathed and moaned and fucked too loud, offending those old ears that hadn't heard a spoken sentence right the first time in many, many, years. But what they hated really was their own lost and wasted youth. They, who had to hide and be furtive in the night, who had to hurl their dreams and lusts down, down into their bloated guts and think no more of them. They, who lived lonely and sour with one poor excuse for a life's partner for fifty years because they had erred when but youths or had grown apart as time passed and found their spirits irrelevant to one another. They, who paid for their repressions and self-torments and the lies of moral life with flaking bowels and squint-eyes and acrid breath and tumored lungs and bubbled, swollen hearts, and ulcers and all the thousand decrepitudes of sorry age. They hated those young people who lived as they wished they had lived but could no longer live. And they called out the fat police, the men with brains of lard, knowing only food and money and a quick spurt of semen, never love. And they tried to make their lives miserable with their laws, and every Eden they touched they greeted with cheers and cries of "inevitable reality." But they persisted and continue to make their own reality. Now it has come to guns and warfare. (And a solitary flute sounds lonely and sad far off among the mountains) So be it. Many of the old ones have learned to espouse their freedoms and live full fruitful lives. But most are sullen and chagrined, and chomp their tasteless food with toothless gums and spit hatred in their water and drink

poison in with every breath. So be it. Let them die.

(The demon Asmodeus, an amalgam of ^Bbeasts and man, many headed, griffin-¹legged, with bat-wings, scaly necks and fetid breath) I would be honest with him in his battle against Satan because honesty will cost me nothing, certainly not victory. And besides, it is my nature to be entirely honest. That is why they hate me. I show them as they are to their god, without their masks and deceptions, without their cushioning wealth, in all their vile nakedness. I strip them, and they are ashamed. He, when stripped, is not ashamed. He is proud of his body and soul. That is good. It does make him special. A worthy adversary. But his cause is doomed, in my opinion, though of course I could be wrong. There is he who will come, a disciple of Satan, a man of cunning, of charm, of honest dimensions, of scholarly interests, and of total dedication to the work of Satan. He has been tortuously trained and groomed for many years. His will is insurmountable and overweening, whereas the other is young and a dreamer, an idealist fraught with burning, intense and contradictory passions. The Satanist plods over adversity like a stubborn turtle over a fallen log. He is patient, slow, relentless. The other fumes and weeps, the deaths of his comrades weigh down his soul, he ages and grows weaker in adversity. And the Satanist shall triumph because he is steady and treacherous. He fights for power, not ideals. The other will not corrupt his ideals in order to achieve victory. Too bad. He is a worthy foe. I would have this battle waged for many years. It gives me great intellectual pleasure.

He has known death before and sees it for the process of transformation that it is. He is not so naive as you would have him. He has seen the death of his childhood illusions. He has seen the death of his dearest loved ones. He weeps for the death of day and for the death of night. And he thrills as well to the new birth of each. He has seen the constellations sink into nothingness as the months progress, and refuses to heed the cold words of the scientists that they shall inevitably return. So he thrills with equal vigor when his

dead friends, the children of the moon, and the scorpion ~~and~~ the thrashing fish return with new days and new seasons. And he knows the whole is endless not because the scientists say so but because he wills it so. And above all this transformation rides his will as upon a soft cloud. He will triumph over death as readily as he will die and he will exult as readily as despair.

(St. Salvatore Galioto, husky, grey-bearded, draped in Florentine flowing robes of shimmering blue, the metal plate in his skull radiating alpha rays, magnetism, radio and television broadcasts, his eyes wise, his smile profound) I was beside them when they wed, amidst the bursting shells and storm of a hidden night. Dark it was, the beach awash with dolorous mewing gulls and scraps of shell. Wings they bore, the spirits of my youth. I questioned if I, the vast Inheritor, could as well bequeathe. It seems so. It seems those tiny hours when we sat and talked meant much to his heart. We shared fears and premonitions and deplored the state of the world. Ah, the masters who knew the symmetry of truth! Yet they, in their deft fingers working pigment into wet plaster, held no sign for me: just dark and light and form and color. The world does not deserve them, nor does it deserve me or him and the masses like us who confuse dreams with possibility. This universe we live in does not dare: it knows but flow, and rhythmic swells, and cycles. Cataclysm? For us yes, puny that we are. We are small enough to suffer. Where, O God, is the raging swollen fist we can hold ^{above} ~~aloft~~ our puniness and bid the pitch and swell cease and pluck the day of glory and human dazzlement down from the heavens by ^{its} ~~its~~ greybeard and make it our legacy?

The day of glory resides in the mind that questions itself; ~~the day of~~

The day of glory resides in the memories that cry out and scorn the pit of Lethe;

The day of glory resides in the hour of set jaws and twitching lips;

The day of glory resides in the soul that renounces ignorance;

The day of glory resides in the figures of the prophets and the Messiah,

Risen from the static canvas of possibility,

Assuming their fevered places in the paralysis of the world;

The day of glory resides in the pupillary reflex of the All-Seeing Eye,

Closing ~~the~~ ^{and} opening as the shadows of the wings of ~~the~~ great ~~D~~ove

Flits so softly, so smoothly before its omniscience.

(The demon Acham, bound in a soft chiton of purple, his three eyes blinking in succession) The day is late. It is now my day and all that it means. Will I confront him?

He would dare. But timidly, sometimes. The vastness of the spirit world bewilders him so he has chosen to offer no sacrifices but to her of the silver girdle. To her he knelt in the park one cold winter night, his lungs heaving after his run, and he looked upon her fullness and saw beauty there none had seen before, lines and curves known only to himself. Spirit of fire, rage before him: spirit of air, whirligig his brain: spirit of earth, drive him: spirit of water, quench the dry rot of sloth and indecision. He has encountered you all before in the realm of dreams.

(St. Diomedes, shaggy, bearded, armed with spear, shield and breastplate, his grey eyes shining) I dared, be damned to you! He hovered above me like a damned seagull, his muscles broad and taut as iron, his eyes like flames. So I takes me spear and of a sudden ^H ~~he~~fts and throws. By the gods, he howled! And his immortality dripped red and sticky all over me and he scurries away like a wounded rabbit. (Winking) I live to tell the tale.

The provinces of the gods, though he chooses their bounds himself, are to him sacred. He builds a pyre of mountain laurel and fernwood and offers them sacrifice with stink of slaughter and acrid smoke. Let all those who would, understand his piety and acknowledge his priesthood.

(The demon Alastor, fanged and clawed and gigantic, a huge double-bladed axe in his left hand and a trailing whip in his right, his face pustuled, craggy, horrible) They have assaulted the darkness before. I've seen to it they have died like curs. I could be merciful if I wish, ~~but~~ it's not in my

nature. Disease, poverty, scorn, palsy and tremor, I drop them from my hands and they float down like snowflakes, covering all beneath. Would you believe once I, too, was in love? She had a thousand beautiful eyes ~~and~~ most loving hands. She made my cock grow stiff and she strummed its warty length with her tentacle palps. O she made me come, a spurting fountain of scorpions and tarantulas ~~and~~ ^{and} buzzing cicadas. And I roared until the very pillars of high heaven shivered in the iceblue night. But she's gone now, transformed, not of her own will but as a part of those immutable laws which we none of us understand, into a vaporous snake. She lives down in a dark grotto glinting with facets of elbaite ~~and~~ ^{and} topaz. And all the time she's curled around this pillar of stone, thin serpentine column of congealed pumice, and she looks at it as if it had eyes to look back at her, and she ~~misses~~ ^{and} kisses tenderly at it, turning herself coldly around and around. She has no room for me in her heart for I was not born a snake or a stone. I am what I am, and I exult in my dimensionlessness and I am proud of my constancy. I do my job well.

He once stumbled upon the mutilated corpse of a lieutenant and knew he had demanded too much. The staring eyes looked scorn into him. And he wished he had refused. He wished the lieutenant had spoken to him of his soft moments, his moments tossing children into the air and making them squeal with laughter. A sentimentalist you say, but where's the harm?

(St. Akiba, his beard tattered and sooty, his eyes searching brightly through the creases and pouches of age, seated upon the shattered remnants of a foundation stone) I heard the word of God from his lips and my heart swelled with joy. The holy ark opened to receive the press of his lips. And glorious was the bright blue day, and the din of battle mighty. Men raced all around me, dashing back and forth like lunatics, and I could do nothing but stagger, bewildered by the commotion ~~and~~ ^{and} the frenzy. He stood his ground like a rock, barking out orders, perceiving ^{the} the proper strategy the instant he laid eyes on the desperate messengers. His words curt. His mind keen. And they needed

me on the battlements to encourage the troops. So I stood there, hundreds of feet above the battle, and dared the legions martyr me. An old man, I, shaken, terrified by the raucousness of battle, yet shaking my feeble fist against^s the sky. And the arrows whistled past me, some feathers even tickling my cheek, but God was with me and none of them hit their mark: they fell harmless on the stones below. The holy city, I prayed, the holy city, save her from the pagan barbarians, save her sweet virtue from brutal, unclean hands. And I saw him silouetted against the setting sun, his bowstring taut and pulled to his^r ear, his arrowhead glinting bronzegold in the long rays of the sun. He let it fly and I followed it with my eyes, my heart thrilling, and saw it shatter a helmet with a red plume, and the legionare fell off his horse to the corpse-soaked ground, his brain skewered, the arrow still quivering. Why could I not weep?

Death, too, has its lessons for the living. The moral lectures of the gods couched in metaphor of blood and pain. And why not? What better spur to the contemplation of life than the inevitable intrusion of death? Still, he was silent about it most of the time. He didn't fear to discuss it in the beginning. There were too many wild plans to be formulated, too many bridges to be built to allow time for moodiness and dark thoughts. And then death became commonplace: too often his soul drew down as by great links of iron the throbbing anguish that would be heard as shrieks and moans, down into a pit somewhere, somewhere he knew no^T of. Dull to death, treating it as a b^Rief instant of living vacuity, a blink in the tired eyes of life's bestial guardian. Inured to it, a bulwark against the paralysis and impotence it breeds. He died, the father, and he took to the woods to smash dead tree limbs with his mighty arms and shoulders, which trembled with sorrow, ~~at~~^{and} the tears, this one time only, this time of all times, filled his eyes and stained his cheeks and heavy breast. Now the cold goddess fills his nights with the example of her immutable immortality. I suppose, in the end, it^{is} for that he seeks.

(The demon Furfur, a stag with ebony horns, glowing coal-like eyes, and a flaming tail, scattering thunder) O the possibilities! The infinities of consciousness! The pleasures yet unnamed that await him! Haw! Haw! Now the fun begins.

He sat beneath a shade tree on a sun-soaked afternoon and tried to corral the dispersion of his thoughts into some kind of order. He wished to direct his life along something reminiscent of a straight line and found that he was but a poor approximator. Done, for we are too many. He had no place, no role, he came unbidden into this life, he fell prey to its passions and anguish, its trials and triumphs. Soon he was embroiled and knew the blinding devastation of the whirlwind. He would speak but he fails to comprehend himself. He knows his passions change with the passage of time. The pleasure of one instant becomes the terror of the next. All flux, all hopes and foresighted visions dissolve into fear and unknowing.

(St. Bar Kochba, hirsute, buckled into beaten bronze and leather, a heavy spear poised in his hand) We sat that day beneath a fig tree. He had come to me filled with the wrath of God. (Nervously rubbing the shaft of the spear, watching his hands) I acknowledged his holiness and bowed to his greater divine wisdom. My thoughts of conquest and rebellion were shallow. I would be an heroic savior of my people and free them from the Roman yoke. I would crush the foreign skulls beneath my hammer and avenge myself of the thousand indignities and emasculations they put upon me. Yet beneath that fig tree he took from me the mortal flame of hate and ignited the holy flame of God's anger. I was to conquer that God may see His will wrought on earth. (He sighs) We lost.

Victory is neither imminent nor permanent. He expects nothing. He is devoid of hope. Win or lose, what are they but shadows, flickering reliefs on the firmament of heaven. He plays his part, serene.

(The demon Pazuzu, glowering, ithyphallic) Fuck me! Fuck me! Fuck me!

(Winking) The sow is mine.

Prone to delusions of potency. An overestimation of sexual athleticism when in actuality one shot load is enough for quite awhile unless extraordinary stimulation is offered. And even then ~~e~~jaculation is barely pleasurable, even at times painful.

(St. Christopher, staff in hand, road-weary, wearing a long dusty brown robe and platform shoes) Such as?

A second or third woman. An arched back, nipples erect. A winking anus, pink and tight. A child, pre-pubescent. Two women locked in Sapphic love, tongue to cunt, breast to belly. A well-lubricated dildo, inserted vaginally or rectally.

(The demon Gaziel, scaly, mole-eyed, with large furry bat-ears) And depressants?

Another male, usually the hairy legs and buttock-crack being most objectionable. Bad breath. Foul crotch odor due to infection or virus. Not to be confused with normal venereal scent, the musk of rut, which he finds most stimulating.

(St. Albert, white-frocked, bent, palsied, his white hair wild and wind-swept, his eyes droopy with pouches and wrinkles, tossing from hand to hand tiny planets of electricity, sapphire and topaz and amethyst and aquamarine) See here now. I must interrupt this parade of phantoms to bring a message of relative importance: BA! For what profiteth a man and all that. I have thought these things before, but always gnawed by doubt. Today, I'm happy to announce that I know. Yes. Yes. (He launches the planets in frantic orbits above his head. They whirl, collide and are consumed in one large mushroom cloud) But, I thought...

(The demons Pay^Mmon, Bebal and Abalam, mounted on camels, wearing crowns, armed with huge scimitars with glin^Tging ~~j~~eweled handles) What ho! What ho! We part the fogs of night! We stir the tempest from its slumber! We wake

the owls to hush the forests with their liquid calls! What ho! What ho!

(They beat their scimitars rhythmically on huge bronze shields) We princes of Hell! In Hell we dwell! We live but to fly through dreams and usher death and formulate grand plots and usher death and tempt with visions of earthly wealth and splendor and usher death ~~and~~ dash the dreams ~~and~~ plots and visions to Hell! Paymon the Terrible! Bebal the Horrendous! Abalam the Magnificent!

He thinks not in the poetry of hours, the fluid verse that makes magic of rhythm and universal pulse. He is driven by commanding voices. He is more than himself; a trinity of trinities of trinities, ad infinitum. His soul issues from its niche in three primary exhalations: the Intellectual, seeking knowledge and serene contemplation; the Beast, seeking blood and vulgar triumph; and the Lover, ravaged by ecstasy and despair. But these exhalations mingle and curdle and divide and are so volatile that he tears words from himself to contain them, to hold them to a form. Better to hold the halo of the moon about one's wrist.

(St. James Aloysius, blue-eyes bugged out by thick glasses, tall, frail) Again? You pulled me once from death, made me sing the epic of the sea I never wrote, made me chant my final soul in one long recitation, prisoner of a magic mirror and the lust and greed of a dead man. Haven't you learned? There is more beyond death than you fantasize. Do you think that you know all the answers? I was freed from pain once through death: you resurrected me so that my brain would be plundered and I might suffer and die again: and now a third time. I wail in the night for your soul that like a beacon sweeps among the fields of the dead and plucks phantoms from their tortured rest. I shall whisper incantations to you that were whispered to me in my youth and made me see girls with wings in the sea and hear the voice of God shouting in the street. Let me be and let me sleep. I ransom myself with gestures and incantations more potent than the Keys of Solomon. (He stares and music swells ~~from~~ his larynx, like a bullfrog, a tenor song, "Feniculi Fenicula")

He has no gift of tongues but for the languages of birds and beasts. He lives in gestures and vibrations, he can survey the quintessence of thoughts with his wide eyes and know you. He has solved the riddle of gesture as he has solved the squaring of the circle: perfect freedom it is to flow with the vagaries of mind and discover in ~~symbol~~^{symbol} and metaphor the reflections of ourselves in our billion facets. Another world, a world foreign to science and linguistics and the stale pallor of the monk and professor. But ah! what songs there he learns to make comets spurn their ~~orbits~~^{orbits} and flecks of star~~dust~~^{cloud} nebulate into novatude ~~and~~^{and} flood black space with light.

(The demon Anarazel, robed in black with a miner's headlamp strapped to his forehead, his bat-wings sleek and his claws caked with old dirt) Shit! (He wipes his sweaty brow with a red kerchief spotted with white polka dots) And he'd follow me into these vapors and fumes? He's crazy. Why, the walls scald where boiling springs surge behind them. And they're flesh-tearing frigid where the hidden glaciers lie. And all the crawly ~~maggot~~^{pale} life drifting here from the living crust above. Hardly a fit place for a poet or a warrior. I'd leave it myself but I'm a fanatic for jewels. And besides, I'm a demon. It's my place.

Gland of agate, fluid of speech, boldness of heart, secure from danger, purveyor of flight through the magnetism of the sun's rays: tears² of amber, shed by the Heliades, the urine of lynx, the congealed rays of the setting sun captured in the sea: cup of amethyst, purple purity, talisman against drunkenness and the neap-tide of love, bestower of victory: crystal of beryl, talisman of the amiable victor, the energetic conqueror: throb of bloodstone, catalyst of fortune and omens, master of winds and thunder, bodily vigor: eye of carbuncle, dragon's terror, preservative of the heart: morbid chalcedony, enemy of poets, foe of the moon: starflash diamond, lord of masters, king of conquerors, magus of truth and falsehood: seapure emerald, eye of the future, daughter of Venus yet for^e of the thrusting knight: mandala of jade, serene,

the crystallization of love: contemplative lapis-lazuli, heavens congealed, soother of fevers: mischievous malachite, protector of children, herald of disaster: nipple of moonstone, suckled in the fullness of Selene's light, bringer of love and prophecy, the poet's stone: mirror of onyx, night and reflection, sows discord ~~and~~ ^{and} separates lovers: rock-crystal fount, congealed water, the tears of the gods dropped as momentos ~~to~~ ^{of} immortal purity and ineluctability: bloodgloss ruby, lord of the impotent, masochistic, weak, lord of ancient submission to sin and passive renunciation of life, blood of the crab: lord of heavens, sapphire, crystal surge of sky, protector against poison: shine of sard, talisman against sorcery and bewitchment by incantation, beware the dark spells of onyx: turquoise, patron of sinners, preservative against falling, jewel of Eden. Treasures indeed! Lumpmusic.

(St. Jeroboam, awash with light from a glowing promontory of rock, patriarchal, bearded, grinning) What treasures then does he search for?

A reconciliation with the loss of paradise. Hours of exultation dimly remembered, vaguely felt, that make of the eternal Present an all-encompassing morass. Frustration that momentary joys, no, not joys so much as a fusion of lusts and appetites, both physical and mental, lasting but a moment cannot be prolonged indefinitely nor the past recaptured at will.

(St. Rehoboam, collapsed on painted desert sands, drooling from his grinning mouth) Ho! The Cad! Still at it, eh?

The visions give him no peace. Like the tentacled squid silouhettied in mauve at Disneyland when he was a tiny child. Something there and then, an interconnection between him as he was in every particular detail and it as it was in every particular detail, made an eternal spark, a connection that altered his life entirely, while having absolutely no effect upon it, being as it was an inanimate object.

[St. Methusaleh, crook-backed, decrepit, goggling, asquat beneath a prune tree, dribbling shit) Ulp. Ulp. Ahhhhhh. By God, so that's it!

And he ~~saw~~ his sister's friend naked from the bath at the top of the stairs and tried at a subsequent date to play with the cunt of another little neighbor but was interrupted so the soft tiny hairless cunt of little girls has become an idée fixe since the fates have apparently forbidden it to him. One quick screwing and he would be cured he feels sure.

(St. Nebuchadnezzar, ponderous, blackbearded, golden-wigged, tries to rise from the marble floor but he weaves, quivers, his knees buckle and he collapses to the floor) Uh-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h...

As I am bidden, so I shall respond. Passive in this universe through wonder, active by ~~temperament~~ ^{MP}.

(A sudden hush of the universe: the planets still, poised for an instant in their wheeling, whirling progress: mists separate, vague forms are seen to flit darkly to and fro seeking to hide from intruding eyes. Out of the stillness a giant bottle appears, corked: the cork pops, and the demon Agathion rises from green vapors, his head porcine, displaying a multitude of curled and polished horns, his breath like flame) It is my hour. I bid thee be silent. My hour of stillness, flux and transition. I bid the spirits cease their wild dance and harken unto me. This night shall take its toll. There will be no others. It is the sleeper's destiny and unavoidable. They have come, dark devils, to end it all. Beware this night of the Thunder God, this night of the howling virago, this night of fecundity and bloom.

(Amidst halting chords of harpsichord and glass harmonica, amidst dark seafoam and relentless waves, the gaunt cavernous face and form of Kaddish appears, seated on a rock risen from the howling sea. His skeletal face peeps from beneath a somber cowl, and his long bony fingers twist strands of seaweed nervously into green and brown Devil's eyes. Knot upon knot. He pulls his cloak closer about his shivering nakedness. His voice fills the heavens softly above the waves and searoar and saltspray.) All that is mortal must end and become one with the frenzy of dreams. Neither happy nor sorrowful nor indifferent

the soul rises from its bed of woes and rests, waiting until clutched and sutured by unknowable fate onto a fresh destiny, a further circle. Woe to the life-rapt, for they shall be consumed in oblivion. Woe to the plodding insensitive, for he shall see ~~h~~^haven and know it not. Woe to the dead lives that leave their outer shells behind, for they shall have profited^R nothing. My distant brother sings of joy and triumph and hope: far to the east I hear his beautiful song, the chords of which are many with many tempos and virtuoso runs. Mine is a flat song, a song of termination, a song of delusion, a melody of lies. Let the sleepers beware, those who have flown from themselves and are lost in a morass of absurdity, a search for righteousness. None, none I say, and never, not even the last spark of life on this planet falls from^M the grace of breath and pulse. And the nothingness shall be revealed, and the swell of the seas shall be found empty and lifeless.

(An old beggar, toothless gums flapping, his warped mouth indecipherable as a smile or frown, dressed in an old undershirt and baggy old pants, his beard sprouting) Am I sick? I'm very dirty. There's dirt on my feet and legs. I won't die will I? Will I? Will I get sick from the dirt? Don't say I'll die. I don't want to get psorrhosis on my skin. Will I die?

Turn away your mad eyes. They scorch my soul.

(The demon Haborym, bearing the heads of a man, a cat, and a serpent, mounted on vipers, a furious flaming torch upraised in his left hand) What have I to do with your philosophy? Be wild, friendly element. There. You see the flood of light and coarse heat. It will avail^A you nothing to turn from it, to shield your face and eyes with your hands, to turn your back on it. It is within you, all through you, it is your destiny. Haw! When you learn you can't conquer it, you will try to mollify it with jokes, say to the rest of the herd that it is but a fever, a momentary delirium, and ask their forbearance. But it never ceases to burn, to gnaw^N. (Leans forward confidentially, his demon-breath acrid and clawing) It's a fist up your ass! Haw!

What you describe may be art, may be poetry, may be the will to conquer. It has driven men mad, and this night of the moon is a night of madness. Madness seeps into the pores of wood and plaster and blistered paint. It bubbles the sheets with sweat and mingled blood. Blankets fall far to the floor in arabesque curls. And the waking hours are the incarnation of these dreams, madness incarnadine. He rests weary of his many lives.

(St. Herakles, massive, rock-like, a head craggy as a cliff, his eyes glaring and blue, hirsute, shaggy, black curls falling in torrents to his shoulders, an ironwood club in his right hand, his bow and quiver in his left, upon his shoulders the thick hide of the Nemean lion. He smells of stables) I ^Bfore many lives in my brief hour. Now I rampage through the heavens, choleric, impatient with paradise, and seek my own destruction. There, the battles have all been fought, eons and eons before the gong-tones of my name rang upon the marbled hills of the farmers and artisans and lovers who worshipped me. I seek a foe worthy of my might, but they all cower frozen in the eternity of night. The great scorpion whose venomous dart I would challenge with my club lies glowing and still upon night's sea, beautiful as a jeweled statue adorned with the pallor of winking silver, gold, and pearl. I cry out for it to rise and the heavens tremble at my gravel voice, and spittle flies from my lips betraying my rage and my country ways, and the others bid me be still, and they crowd around me, suffocating my immensity with their babbling and cautioning and timid rage. Ares cowers behind a fleety moon lest I see his annoyance and wrench his back with the clamp of my fist. I have known many lives and they have left their marks. She unmanned me beneath the silver of her exotic moon. She bid me corset myself in her tiny garment and tickle my bear's hide with the tender tongues of silk and satin and fine gauze. Foolish I looked standing before her, my cock all leather and veiny hanging below the hem of her tiny dress. And yet the surrender, the sweet surrender to her domination, the renunciation of responsibilities to all but her and the holy glory of

dedicating the immensity of my strength to a frail lover, to humble myself in proportion to my godly powers, it thrilled me, excited me, made me for once wish that the treadmill toward immortality on which I rode would stop and that I might freeze time where I stood, her fragile paddle curled threateningly over my hairy bottom. She made me bellow like a bull, she did, when at last she curled her legs around me and filled her cunt with my stiff cock and I stood still, my eyes shut and humble, and she pumped me with her soft body and made my balls swell and rise and explode and I bellowed like a bull. What wonder in those many lives.

He rests, awash in the peace of night. The ends will be tied soon, they approach even now. Out of infinite potentiality arises only death.

(The demon Clauneck, jewelled, sceptred, face of a wizened rat, his tiny eyes darting ceaselessly, his dozen hands clutching precious stones, gold, ingots of platinum) Yes. Yes. O Yes. The feel, you see, of solid paradise. Let him dream on. Don't awaken the fool and shatter his illusions. But I am truly king of kings. His paltry messiahship fades even now with the slow wheeling of this bloated earth. A Messiah? Him? You make me laugh. Indeed. My minions rule the world. They have appropriated for themselves all the means of production, all the natural resources, all the pleasures. They ^{over cocktails at the club} ~~batter~~ among themselves ~~for nothing~~ what it would take him ten lifetimes of sweat to earn. Connections, corruption, and callousness: my legend. I have it engraved on my coat of arms, ingot d'or crossed upon an ingot d'argent and shekels rampant. For, protest as you will, it was the idealists who fired the first shots, who rose in a body and spilled innocent blood upon the streets. Alas, alas! We were content with permitting the masses' lives of infinite frustration, but lives none the less. Now, alas, there are guns and bullets and rape and chaos. Believe me, there are no ideals amidst the steam and stench of blood. Let them grab their clubs and knives and homemade bombs: let them parade like madmen up and down Fifth Avenue and break the windows of Tiffany

and Steuben: let them disgrace themselves with their mindless destruction of objects whose intrinsic value is a thousand times greater than the worth of all their pathetic lives pulped into one stinking lump. I am a patron of the arts and I raise a modulated but stern voice against the ravages of these barbarians. They sully beauty with their vulgar displays.

Battle has been joined as a result of historical process. If not he, then another. It has been waged with dignity and restraint, according to strict ideals. True, spurting blood exudes a stench all its own. Perhaps the stars are at fault.

(St. Ann Frank, gaunt, eyes wide with premature wisdom, standing naked before the world, her new breasts forthright and firm, her pubic hair like the soft bristles of an elegant brush) What I have seen. What I have seen. The horror! People so dehumanized they fulfill the most vulgar caricatures of their tormentors. One man, an anonymous man naked in the herd, was chosen at random to select girls for the guards' pleasure. He trembled and begged to be let off but they just laughed and prodded him with an electric rod that made his flesh sizzle. Burning sulphur filled the room. So he went about and selected us according to his own lights, unwittingly revealing his innermost sexual preferences, an unspoken source of amusement for the Nazis. We kept our eyes upon the floor, dared not look into his eyes, his tortured eyes that so suddenly looked into himself and saw the horrible angel of death. He picked me and I held back my tears, stepped out of the herd and into line with the pretty others and we stood covering our breasts and private parts, blushing, weeping. I suppose he chose well because the guards laughed and were pleased. I'm sure that weeping man wanted to die as I wanted to die as we all wanted to die. No, behind it all we all wanted to live, that is the tragedy, that's why we let ourselves be tortured and starved and degraded. What those SS officers did to me, did with my body, the violations, the sick abuses... I'm glad I was stolen from my family, from my mother, I would have been so ashamed. And the spirit of that weeping man still floats about the earth, coactus volui,

penitent, somber, deluded by high thoughts of justice.

The spirit still is silent. It seeps into their houses like the deadhand of the fatal plague and swirls an acrid mist about their souls. They shrivel and die amidst the plenty of their crimes. So let it always be.

(The demon Any, his human form encased in flames) Yes, I have learned to make a paradise of my torment. See: the flames drip and splash about my body like glowing water. My flesh is immortal and is not consumed. Nor are my eyes shut to the beauty of their splashing radiance. Torment is but in the mind you see. Let all be as it would: I care not: I shall survive.

So too his nightwhispers and midnight vigils. So too his gauntlet raised against death's specter⁵. Dark, dark the night that cowers him against the fragrant mountain laurel and wets the soft branches with his tears. In triumph he shall ride upon the streets of his Holy City, a golden plume waving joyously from his crest.

(St. Figgie Pudding raises an elf arm) I had seen him with glowing Maggie the Wimple and bright Jenny the Pew and also way back in the woods on a moon-filled night all awash with sweat spinning on the arm of Whirligig Annie. They bounced him from petal to petal and wherever their blessed feet touched they left a drop of sweet dew. So where is this spirit of whom they speak, of guns and blood?

(The demon Amagon, crowned, chink-eyed, asquat upon cushions of electric blue silk, staring down at six-inch fingernails) It will return. The lethargy, the lack of will, the weakness, the despondent sense of overpowering meaninglessness. He bears it ill. It reaches mottled, bony fingers about his throat and quivers to throttle him. It will, soon. Hopeless. A poet's soul should rise above the mucilage depth of despair, part the heavenly veil with soft hands, and gaze in rapture upon the face of God. Haw! A vile, contentious lot. And this one the worst of all. He thrives on asserting his will against the combined might of masters who wield inconceivable powers. He plots against

my worshippers relentlessly, but the fatigue is upon him again. He grows thick and soft and numb in this night of black clouds and vapors.

* * *

She rises, parting the mists of my eternal night, a dark angel. The ^wsweat
 pouring from my hot brow cannot drain her phantom from me. All else is gone.
 Time: a maculation of the layers of space, a dark instant, dimensionless.
 Heaven: rhythmed by the heavy tremble of my legs, my feet staggering upon the
 dust and offal beneath the millwheel, bounded by the stench that rises fresh
 and pungent with each lunging step like breezes from Hell. O God. O God.
 The dead globes of my eyes, charred and convoluted, gape hideously from scarred
 flesh. The mighty hero, the dedicated lover, is a monster. These arms that
 could sunder the very foundation stones of temples with a single blow must
play at weakness even as the other woeful wretches shackled and stumbling
 beside me. Some die at the wheel, barely sighing out their souls, and fall
 heavy to the filth below, dragged by their shackled wrists in endless circles,
 tripping my blind feet. I suffer as few of the godless suffer. I suffer as
 few of the ascetic zealots suffer: O to revel in the trilling thrill of of rushing
 water and not eat meat. To glory in the flashing ⁶handed sunrise and whip my
 back a score of times a day. To have the living birds and pelted things and
 rainbowed crawling life accompany me, impoverished, to a hermit's den redolent
 of bear and rotting leaves. But I see beyond all my despair I am rewarded by
 the recollected vision of her face and form. How godly a thing is memory!
 More mindly powerful than the passionate moment, the instant reality when all
senses are consumed in a swirl and flush of wild chaos. Then she is nothing,
 I am noth^{ING}~~ing~~, mere particles confused and circumnavigant, weeping or laughing
 or staring stock-still from excess. But now she rises as a symbol, her lover's
 loins grown into the ineffable name of God, her tear-washed eyes the mystic
 tetragrammaton. Her memory is the ancestor of my anticipation which in turn
 is the ancestor of hope. We shall be reunited that one last time, in the
 great temple of the Phillistine Baal, and she, pretending to taunt me will
 rise from the cushions of her pathetic lovers and take me herself to the two
 great pillars and embrace me with love passionate and pure and they will be
 stunned and silent, confused, searching for lust and obscenity in her eyes

but finding only love, and my strength will tremble ^A the pillars beneath my hands and she and I will die to live forever clutched tightly in each other's arms... Women. What wild things they are. He sprawled on the thick moist grass beneath the heavy fragrant tree. They fill our minds and take over our lives. They become the end of an indefinable quest and god knows why! They-- or a special she. He chewed a strawblade, an earring shining in the sun. His friend looked asleep. I wish I knew why I am mad for them. They can twist me, turn me, humiliate me, make a harlequin grotesque out of me and hang me out to dry: still, I frolic back for more, all giggles and squeals. Archetypes, I think. Something from our ancient past when our dicks were more than playthings and they grew swollen with rut and we had to fuck so badly we could taste it and the sloe-eyed women would saunter ~~past~~ ^{PAST}, possessions yet possessors, the earth mothers, glorious in their ^Ffertility. Some would sway past, breasts swollen, smelling of motherhood, and they'd give themselves to you, their long legs slim and taut, their cunts wet with lust, and we'd growl and thrust our hips and churn the soft mosses with calloused toes and passion would overwhelm us both and milk would trickle from her breasts in her heat, and gobs of semen would burst from our balls, filling them, spilling thick and white ^{milky} and churned onto the grass. ~~Men, would be wasted.~~ These earth mothers couldn't be forgotten in spite of death and war and religious totemizing or anything. They stuck to the dark folded patches of our brains and there they wait today, protoplasmic spiders with tendrils floating darkly in the saltseawash of our brains. He stretched, feeling the soothing blood squeeze through his muscles, the tendon string pull gently on his tight scrotum. God, they haunt me. But then again I've always felt that I'm an evolutionary throwback. I haven't evolved into sophisticated indifference ^R or passive ^S acquiescence. He laughed. I guess I just haven't come down yet ~~really~~ from the trees. Trees. Waters purling swiftly beneath the overhanging weeping fronds of leaves. Beneath moonlight. The gaze of Selena. She comes, behind beneath within the babble of waters the

scent of lost forsaken leaves the brush and kiss^s of the wind. Cold in the moonlight and water, cold and frightened and alone yet thrilled in some mad way by the sweep of savage symbols, the cross, guttural, jocular voices, unfamiliar sounds that still I know more intimately than the tissue and fiber of my own body. This night heralds majesty, moments lucid and forbidding yet filled with joy, days and years swept in endless chaos a host of faces and scenes and terrors that would kill me with their forbiddenness. Casket of the Goddess: she spills them before my wondering nightm^{are}~~ore~~ in prelude to... in consequence of...what? Selena! I drown in your bounty. I drown in the waters and the faces, the faces with those gleaming eyes sunk in dark tormented sockets, eyes that see through me, make me vacant, scatter my atoms among a billion billion suns. He sits before his smoking lamp, night after night, sleepless, tormented, the mad warlock. He doesn't notice me anymore behind him, he cares not that I sit with my demon's eyes scorching into his flesh. He has run to me from sin, I am sure of it now, and has only collidⁱ~~ed~~ed with himself flying the other way. What noble arts and romantic vistas I have laid before him: the conquering nations, ancient Cathay and the Hellenes and the savage, decadent Romans. Aix-la-Chapelle, the moldy edifice of gloried Charlemagne, the parchments of Alcuin. Roland rose bewildered before him, a hulking brute of a man, fit matter for timeless legend, and the charming Olivier with his iceblue eyes and flowing gold hair. Ignorant and brutal, yet simple, simply pleased, sleeping out their nights in deep repose, what few dreams they had but lusts and gentle hours of peace, comfortable patches of grass by dancing waters and fountains. And he pulls at his beard grown long and grey and he tosses on his pallet pulling the straw in his rage to be satisfied. So he sits through the night scanning the ancient mystic volumes, perplexed that he is denied the beatific vision that turned filthy cow^u~~erds~~herds and seamstresses into saints. He flees a sin I know: an ancient sin that has taken root, thrown sprigs and branches into his furthest cerebral crevices,

has jostled the winds of his fate by shimmering the very air about him, his aura of time and space, so that he finds but himself, his tortured, fränzied self wherever he turns. Perhaps sometime that sin may rise and confront him like a foul ghoull and he can feel its fetid breath and hear its phlegmy condemnations and then he will either vanquish it with a mountainous effort of directed will, and be reconciled, or he will succumb, be ground to filth and dust, never to rise, never to speak, no more to know the flight of self through the universe. And they sat like statues in front of him, cool, waiting to hear what he was gonna say. I listened from the back, always from the darkness, a black woman in shadows watching shadows long and black and lean, kind of skinny and bony compared to his short thick muscular body. His light beard moved with his mouth as he spoke clearly ^{and} smoothly to them. They listened, quiet, cool. It was like he came from a different world, from Mars, yet he knew them so well, knew that they could and would be reached, knew the limits of their commitment, knew the hundreds of shattered dreams and scummy alleys and women like me pressed blackly in the shadows. He didn't come to question or challenge but to simply to let them know that he knew. And then he left: just like that. And those three just sat staring into empty space staring at the piece of air his leaving blew back at them. And I saw their armbands and berets and trimmed beards and they looked like children playing a big game, and I saw my naked black hand resting stiffly on the rusty door knob. And I looked up to the high roof of the empty warehouse, and my soul was that warehouse, big and high and empty, a dirty warehouse since they found him dead from dope, his hand holding that crayon, a last message for me. The lovers since then, the empty love ^S, the nights of sweat ^{AND} ~~and~~ drinking and the loud throb of disco from radios set on dirty tables beside the beds. I saw in their faces their shock and surprise and easy acceptance of fate. I admired that little white man who left my body trembling ^{IN} in his wake and I thought of his body, cold, stiff, suddenly unable to vibrate the air anymore, just

a grey lump waiting for germs and worms. He would be like my love, cold and crazy, leaving something unfinished behind him, leaving something that no one could fully understand, something that he had wanted in the worst way to bring peace to others, and answers, and most of all light and which he ⁵ knew would be left in the hands of other men, uncaring, dark silent men. And as I stood peeking out at them, hearing them start to talk and try to cover their nervousness with slight laughter, I wanted to cry, Jesus I wanted to cry so hard my eyes swelled and my mouth twitched but nothing happened, I just stood there staring at that big empty warehouse. And I knew her that night in my tent with the guards lounging ¹ outside and the thousand voices of the mountain night trilling us to rest. And she whispered to me of her love of herself and her child and I, who had pitied her as a victim, a symbol of violation and outrage, felt ashamed. We are all sullied and raped in our lives, most of us violating ourselves, and without end. And I grew silent and thought of my pleasant youth spent reading the philosophers, learning to first see life in its highest and most idealistic colors, believing that when the time came ⁵ ~~and~~ some abstractions like Virtue and Justice would doff their regal robes and unapproachable airs and descend to meet me, to welcome me without reservation as the limbo poets did Dante. I ⁵ believed such eternal verities by their glorious raiment alone would dispel all the clouds of ^u human ignorance and that I, of all generations of men, would be he who would bear those Goddesses in glorious majesty to the high places of the earth and revel in the universal joy ⁹ and peace they would spread. Her eyes in the lamplight showed me what frail creatures we are, how our highest dreams cannot survive beyond the lisp of youth and that we merit only frustration and cynicism with our ^h higher wisdom, ⁶ And we fall. She was pushed. I jumped. From her fall came her son and ^T the holiness of a new and real and abiding love. From mine? Guns, and blood and the unmitigated outrage of warfare. A romantic ideal: swashbuckling freedom ⁶ fighter, battling the forces of evil to free the innocent and well-meaning from oppression. Tales

of ancient heroes ring in my ears, the noble Achilleus, the daring Theseus,
 the relentless Herakles. To learn sacrifice takes a lifetime. Neither glorious
 victory nor noble martyrdom characterize the great man: ~~moving~~⁴ when no love
 is returned, finding oneself in the vanguard of one's enemies, living ~~to see~~
 your ideals trampled by wild disciples working ~~through~~^{OUT} their own neuroses at
 your expense. And a great pity ~~for~~^{overwhelmed me} this baggage of hunching humanity that
 distils over this planet like a humid nightmare. She pulled me passionately
 to her, her eyes unclouded and glowing in the lusty night, she opened her legs
 to me and I trembled like a child and melted into her and, our eyes shut tightly,
 we spilled together in ecstasy and superabundant love. She cuddled me close
 while I wept, heaving in her arms, and hushed me and wiped the tears from my
 streaming face, and I wept for my sins and I wept for my sorry fellow men and
 I wept for the past and the future and the gleaming stars at night condemned
 to soar in crystal spheres, without end, at the whimsy and caprice of the tired
 ancient gods. Where had they been laid to rest, those dreams rain~~bow~~^Bed and
 whispered and giggled forth? Broad, his face smiled and his teeth loomed large
 and separate, ivory portcullis of a booming joking cavern. He winked. Between
 the purple mountains, the mountains clothed in thick grass and husky clouds,
 the mountains where the vine trellises itself from tree-limb to tree-limb and
 the eager ladies cavort among the trickling fall of fountains and liquid pools
 of diamond shimmering in the sun. I'm back, you see, to tell you the good
 news. They wait for you there. Alone, no more. She waits there and her
 hundred smiling friends and her gold hair gleams in the happy rays of the sun.
 She ~~rests~~^E by the sparkling waters and turns her eyes up to you as you enter
 from behind, out of the cool woods, and her foxy eyes sparkle up at you. Yes,
 I can't always be around to wake the joy from your cowled shoulders, but for
 this I will ~~shiver~~ⁱ it off and send it swirling around you, toward yourself,
 ever spinning, toward yourself, to be cupped and softly touched like something
 newborn, warm and precious, again and again and again:

New York, 1977